

# Massachusetts PYs 2020-2023 - Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Combined or General)

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# Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

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[13] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

## a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has an active and productive State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) through the monthly SRC committee meetings, quarterly meetings, and consumer conference. With MRC, the SRC has conducted satisfaction and needs assessments surveys that have gathered consumer input to more effectively address the needs of individuals seeking the support of MRC to find employment.

The SRC, through the SRC State Plan and Executive committees, made the following recommendations to the Commission:

### 1. Increase and improve the quality of employment outcomes for MRC consumers by:

- a. Developing a self-employment curriculum for those consumers whose interests and/or disabilities are better suited for working independently. For example, MCB has a Small Business Enterprise Program that may serve as a model. The SRC is also requesting data on self-employment outcomes, i.e., what percentage of consumers with IPEs with self-employment goals exited with self-employment and maintained that self-employment in the second quarter after exit.
- b. Ensuring CIES vendors are complying with their MRC contracts and the MRC/EOHHS RFR (e.g., vendors are conducting outreach and developing relationships with prospective employers). To understand MRC's CIES quality control process and data.

- c. Restoring MRC's Individual Consumer Consultant program (ICC) and providing the SRC with the percentage of participants employed upon completing the program during ICC's last two years of existence.
  - d. The SRC Business & Employment Opportunity Committee working with the Job Placement Unit to understand the team's goals, processes, and barriers to accomplishing those goals, and, where possible, assist with addressing those barriers.
1. **Continue to increase consumer awareness of transportation options and explore efforts to assist consumers with transportation**
- a. Needs Assessment Committee determined that transportation remains a significant need for many MRC consumers.
  - b. MRC should refine and update its transportation fact sheets on MRC's website as needed and incorporate these into trainings and informational materials based upon its research.
  - c. Development of other informational materials and training should be considered to assist consumers in learning about other available resources including:
    - Local Councils on Aging
    - EOHHS Human Service Transportation (HST) Office
    - MBTA pilot project with Uber and Lyft - MRC should request for more information
  - d. MRC should continue to research collaboration with MassRides, MassMobility, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Career Centers, the HST office, local and regional planning boards, and other organizations on projects or programs that might be able to assist consumers with transportation, given that transportation is a systemic issue requiring collaboration on multiple levels.
    - Open a discussion on ideas to address the transportation issues facing MRC consumers and individuals with disabilities and how MRC can work together.
  - e. MRC should also do a survey of its offices to find out more about how its local staff are connected to the local transportation regional coordinating councils.
  - f. A plan should be formed to initiate a group of volunteers across the state to drive people to work and back.
  - g. This task has many roadblocks but it may be feasible with a coordinated effort on the part of many agencies. Regional data should be compiled to possibly have alternative choices based on the demographics of the people and area.
  - h. Improve transportation access to consumers by one or more of the following options:
    - Establishing a petty cash/revolving fund at each area office for immediate transportation needs (e.g., cash for gas or a cab is cheaper than paying a vendor; North Carolina and South Carolina VR use such funds);
    - Putting a local registered taxi company on the state contract (Indiana VR does this)
    - Partnering with Uber/Lyft/other ride-share companies (Georgia VR does this);
    - Partnering with the entities that fill gas for state vehicles (that entity should already be on the state contract) to allow consumers to get gas from those entities (New Hampshire welfare does something similar)
    - Obtaining a credit card from a local gas station (or a state credit card) for each area office tied to a state account that can be used by staff to get gas to a consumer.

1. **Increase the quantity and quality (i.e., wage outcomes) of on-the-job trainings (OJTs), on-the-job evaluations (OJEs), job driven trainings (JDTs), and apprenticeships by targeting employers who offer higher wages and targeting in-demand skill sets (e.g., Salesforce).** In addition to the annual Office of Federal Contract Compliance program (OFCCP) hiring event, MRC should also consider developing regionalized hiring events in collaboration with the regional employment advisory boards.
2. **Given the increasing number of individuals diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum, MRC should identify and utilize resources that will expand staff and CIES vendor knowledge and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and practical strategies for supporting vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers as they learn to live and work independently.** Examples of resources include: the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE), Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), the Autism Commission, and Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC).
3. **Procure other important services on the state contract (e.g., math tutors at each area office, standardized test registration) to avoid having consumers pay upfront for these services (or not receive them at all), especially when many consumers (e.g., clients on SSI and/or SSDI) are not obligated to contribute to the cost of their VR services.** The SRC Policy Committee is requesting a list of MRC services that are currently on the state contract to understand what MRC can already write purchase orders (POs) for and thereby also know what services MRC cannot pay via PO.

Meanwhile, the SRC Policy Committee would coordinate with the SRC Consumer Needs/Satisfaction Committee to determine whether survey responses can also identify services needed on the state contract and will share its findings with MRC. The SRC recommends MRC conduct a survey of area offices asking counselors what services they believe are needed on the state contract and share survey results with the SRC Policy Committee.

Lastly, the SRC requests the following to better inform members on the procurement process:

- The job title and department of MRC staff who handle procuring services on the state contract.
- How MRC makes decisions on what services to procure including how often a review of needed services occurs.
- A brief description of the key steps and barriers to procuring services on the state contract including the approximate duration of the procurement process.
- What the current remedy is for services needed by a consumer that are not on the state contract.

**6. Continue outreach to communities of ethnic and diverse backgrounds on vocational rehabilitation and other MRC service offerings, especially in the Asian community:**

- a. The MRC has made a commitment to reach out to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are also ethnic and cultural minorities through its Diversity/Bilingual Committee and through its Language Access Plan.
- b. The MRC should continue these outreach efforts to ethnic and cultural minorities, especially to the Asian community, which has been identified as slightly underserved by the VR program in Massachusetts.
- c. As growth in the Asian community continues to be seen in the state's general population, it is recommended that MRC continues its outreach efforts to Asian communities in particular.
  - There was growth in the number of Asian consumers served by MRC during FY2018 but it still remains below the proportion in the overall state population.

- d. MRC conducted a focus group of Asian consumers in the Lowell office during Fall 2018.
  - Information from this focus group and additional consultation with MRC's Diversity/Bilingual Committee yielded a wealth of information and suggestions on additional steps MRC can take in this area to further engage with the Asian community
  - It is recommended MRC use the findings from this focus group to assist in developing strategies for outreach to this community.
  - Several focus groups will be scheduled in the coming year.
- e. It was suggested that the first focus group be held in the Braintree office. Possible other sites are Boston and Cape Cod.
- f. MRC should continue to focus on how to reach out effectively to these communities, including conducting outreach to local community agencies and organizations that serve ethnic and cultural minorities, among other methods.
- g. MRC should continue to consult its Bi-Lingual Committee for recommendations on how to reach out more to minority communities.
- h. MRC has been successfully increasing its numbers in terms of Hispanic community and best practices in this area may also assist with outreach to the Asian community.
- i. Possible other outreach areas, are local public cable TV shows, targeting the underserved communities.
- j. Radio programs can also be included. Many in the languages of the particular group, we are trying to serve. Also reaching out to local non-profit organizations in the community.
- k. Having a presence at various functions such as conferences or community gatherings, with perhaps a booth distributing literature.
- l. The SRC Unserved/Underserved Committee should add reaching out to the Asian community to their agenda.
- m. Furthermore, it is recommended that the MRC's Diversity/Bilingual Committee, the SRC Needs Assessment Committee and Unserved/Underserved committee consider meeting jointly to come up with ideas for enhanced outreach to minority communities, including the Asian community.
- 1. **Increasing post-secondary training outcomes by adding dedicated college liaisons to MRC staff who encourage VR consumers to seek postsecondary training, ensure consumer connections to college disability services, and research grants/scholarships.** In addition, the SRC is recommending MRC counselors refer consumers, as appropriate, to the American Student Assistance program for help finding grants/scholarships and navigating higher education.

## 2. The designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has responded to the Statewide Rehabilitation Council's input and recommendations as follows:

1. MRC is committed to continuing to improve the quality of employment outcomes for its consumers. MRC places consumers into a wide variety of jobs based on each individual's interests, needs, skills, and choices. MRC has an existing process that counselors can utilize to develop a self-employment

business plan in collaboration with the consumer. MRC can provide data on the number of individuals who have self-employment as an employment goal and outcome data for consumers successfully exiting with self-employment. Self-employment information at 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit is not available as it is not included in the UI wage data provided to MRC.

MRC has a quality assurance monitoring process for CIES contracts to ensure that CIES vendors comply with the RFR and MRC requirements and to evaluate the quality of services provided under the RFR. Providers report key performance indicator results to MRC on a monthly basis including both performance data and individual progress reports on consumers. Providers also meet with MRC staff to discuss performance on a quarterly basis. MRC will have three program monitoring staff in place to provide oversight on CIES, specifically dedicated to managing vendor relationships. Additionally, the Analytics and Quality Assurance department will provide regular performance reports and conduct a performance evaluation.

MRC recommends that consumers be placed into permanent competitive integrated employment. The ICC program does not currently exist and past outcome data is not available. MRC is developing a new consumer engagement office/program to outreach to consumers. This program is currently under development.

MRC will continue to closely work with the SRC Business and Employment Opportunity Committee to discuss goals, processes, and work on solutions to overcome barriers to employment for people with disabilities. MRC's Job Placement Director will continue to meet with the SRC committee as part of this process.

2. MRC recognizes that transportation continues to be a significant need for some of our consumer population and can present a barrier to employment for individuals with disabilities. This need has been established through the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This is a complex issue that goes beyond MRC and VR in general and requires collaboration on the local, state, and federal levels.

MRC would like to work with the SRC to determine if any marketing priorities exist in terms of transportation. MRC will update its transportation fact sheets, and MRC can research additional information that we can make available on our website for consumers, including information on councils of aging, the MBTA Ride Uber/Lyft pilot, and others. MRC will also reach out to the Independent Living Centers to discuss collaboration on transportation. MRC has also worked to obtain automatic eligibility for the Transportation Access Pass discount program for MRC consumers.

MRC would like to work with the SRC to open a discussion on collaboration with entities such as MassMobility, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Career Centers, and other organizations on potential projects or programs to assist consumers with transportation. The SRC's assistance in this process would be appreciated.

MRC's Transportation Options Grant evaluated the strategy of volunteer rides and discovered a significant obstacle as volunteers would need commercial insurance to transport people in their vehicles and participate in ongoing training programs which would be cost prohibitive

MRC can provide funds to consumers for short-term transportation needs through existing maintenance resources working with their counselor. EOHHHS Human Service Transportation, which MRC utilizes, has an array of vendors for transportation including taxi companies. MRC can reach out to Georgia VR to find out about their partnership with ride share companies and check with the MBTA on their Uber/Lyft pilot. MRC will continue to utilize its maintenance process which allows for monitoring of costs and internal controls.

3. The MRC Job Placement Unit has developed a wide variety of employer partnerships. MRC has and will continue to utilize OJTs, OJEs, and Job Driven Trainings such as Home Depot, Human Service Worker, CVS, and other employers, and is developing a new JDT with Cisco. For the annual OFCCP hiring event, this is a statewide event, which includes local components across the state, and MRC will continue to work with employer advisory boards on job placement efforts. MRC will develop key performance indicators and will measure outcomes including wages for these efforts.

4. MRC is committed to supporting vocational rehabilitation consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorders in their efforts to live and work independently. The MRC Commissioner is a co-chair of the Autism Commission, and MRC works closely with the Department of Developmental Services, which is the designated agency to provide services for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. MRC will continue to collaborate with AANE, FSCN, and other entities to improve services for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. MRC's training department in collaboration with AANE will continue to develop and provide staff trainings related to assisting consumers on the Autism Spectrum.

5. MRC will make available a list of services utilizing contracts to the SRC. MRC can provide information from the Needs Assessment in terms of services identified by consumers as important and needed. MRC can utilize its counselor satisfaction survey to ask counselors about what services could be procured on a statewide basis. MRC is in the process of enhancing our Contracts Department including staffing, and will provide an update to the SRC on progress. MRC conducts an annual review of contracts that involves program and fiscal staff, and MRC follows applicable state procurement rules and processes to procure services. MRC can have a fiscal staff person attend an SRC meeting to review the procurement process upon completion of MRC's revamp of the procurement process after March 2020.

6. MRC is committed to serve communities of ethnic and diverse backgrounds across Massachusetts to assist consumers in obtaining competitive employment. MRC has identified through the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment that Asian/Pacific Islanders are slightly underserved by the MRC VR program in comparison to their proportion in the statewide population.

MRC conducted a focus group of Asian consumers and community members in the Lowell office during Fall 2018. MRC is planning an additional focus group in the Braintree/Quincy area. The Lowell Focus Group revealed a number of possible strategies for outreach to the Asian community. A workplan was developed with Local Area Office staff to follow up on the recommendations made in the focus group. These efforts could be replicated in other area offices as a strategy.

MRC is in the process of establishing a consumer engagement office/program to outreach to consumers. MRC will work with the new manager of this program and the Diversity/Bilingual Committee, and the SRC Unserved/Underserved Committee to develop a community outreach model and strategy for the Asian community, including a workplan to conduct outreach to local community agencies and organizations that serve ethnic and cultural minorities. The Commissioner is meeting with the bilingual committee in September and outreach to minorities will be discussed.

7. MRC counselors serve as liaisons, and work closely with colleges and universities to refer consumers to college disability service offices. MRC staff and vendors work closely with post-secondary institutions on assisting consumers in obtaining post-secondary training. MRC will research information on the American Student Assistance program and can make available to its counseling staff.

8. MRC will work closely with the SRC to establish a workplan to track progress on the recommendations and associated steps related to the recommendations. MRC will work with the SRC to use electronic methods, such as Survey Monkey, to collect recommendations from the SRC. MRC will also connect the SRC with the SRC's in other states to acquire best practices.

### **3. The designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission reviewed and responded to all recommendations provided by the Statewide Rehabilitation Council.

### **b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. A local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

Not Applicable - MRC has not requested a waiver of Statewideness.

2. The designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

Not Applicable - MRC has not requested a waiver of Statewideness.

3. Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Not Applicable - MRC has not requested a waiver of Statewideness.

## c. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

MRC does not have any formal cooperative agreements in place with State and Federal agencies outside of the statewide workforce development system.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission considers cooperation and collaboration with other agencies to be essential and beneficial to most effectively serve people with disabilities and to assist individuals with opportunities for employment based on their choices, needs, interests and preferences. Other agencies provide critical supports, necessary resources, and dedicated human service professionals all of which amplify and enhance the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. For many years, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has worked closely and cooperatively with the staff of other agencies in serving mutual consumers. Collaboration often extends well beyond services to particular individuals. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with other agencies to:

- Affect system change
- Increase resources, funding and service options
- Improve communication and mutual understanding among staff
- Change public attitude toward issues of disability

- Achieve common goals on behalf of those whom the agencies serve
- Enhance services for mutually served consumers to assist them in achieving their employment and independent living goals.

Agencies with which such collaboration has occurred and has remained active locally and at the Statewide level include, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Developmental Services, the Social Security Administration, the Massachusetts Autism Commission Medicaid/Mass Health, Department of Public Health, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Adult and Community Learning Services, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as the Department of Correction and Department of Youth Services through MRC's Supported Employment Programs.

With the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), MRC and DTA have established a program called Empower to Employ. The goal of this program is to establish an integrated employment model for individuals with disabilities receiving TANF benefits. This joint partnership provides resources to assist shared participants living with disabilities to be independent through employment. The partner agencies use a jointly-funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services. Through this collaborative effort, DTA and MRC are utilizing an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to facilitate recruitment (pre-engagement), engagement, service delivery and placement. The IRT informed approach includes:

- Individual and group outreach to recruit and refer participants who are a strong match for Empower to Employ and MRC VR services;
- Client-centered assessments that identify goals that are most meaningful to the participant, focus on the whole family, and tap into what motivates participants to achieve their goals;
- Flexibility to meet participants where they are and creativity in addressing challenges as they arise;
- Enrollment into specified training or vocational rehabilitation services to support the goals set with the participant during assessment; and
- Continuous co-case management between MRC and DTA teams that bolsters participant engagement and re-engagement, when necessary, and empowers them to navigate their pathway to economic stability.

## 2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is the state operator of the programs funded under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act. The MRC VR program and MRC area offices have excellent relationships with these programs operated by the agency. These include MassMatch, a program that provides comprehensive information about the availability and funding of assistive technology, the Assistive Technology Program, and the Assistive Technology Loan Program that provides low—interest loans to consumers when other resources are not available to purchase needed adaptive technology. These programs are available to and are used by MRC VR consumers.

## 3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

There are no programs in Massachusetts carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## 4. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

MRC does not have any formal cooperative agreements in place with noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission further collaborates with organizations that provide services, in whole or in part, to specific constituencies, including out of school youth. Among such organizations are the Massachusetts Association of Financial Aid Administrators, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, the Arthritis Foundation, the Massachusetts Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Massachusetts Easter Seals, United Cerebral Palsy, the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, and the Epilepsy Association. These collaborations may be informal or may include service contracts. The purpose, goals, and actions established in these contracts are very similar to the agendas set forth in interagency collaboration.

## 5. State use contracting programs.

The Commonwealth operates a Supplier Diversity Program including the following categories: Minority (MBE), Women (WBE), Service—Disabled Veteran (SDVOBE), Veteran (VBE), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Business Enterprises (LGBTBE); and Disability—Owned Business Enterprises (DOBE). MRC participates in this program as part of statewide contracting as an equal opportunity initiative.

## d. Coordination with Education Officials

Describe:

### 1. The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has established interagency cooperation between public education and public vocational rehabilitation agency regarding vocational rehabilitation services pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) to provide individualized transition services for students with disabilities that lead to successful post-school outcomes in competitive integrated employment, postsecondary education and training, independent living and community participation.

MRC continues to work to increase collaboration with educational officials, and has worked with DESE to outline interagency cooperation in a formal agreement entitled “Administrative Advisory on Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition Services”. MRC has a procedure to review this agreement with DESE and make changes as required. MRC has also updated its Pre-ETS policies and procedures as of mid-2019 and will make further edits to its policies and procedures as needed going forward.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) have developed this advisory to Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) as described below and in other sections of this document to:

1. Define and describe Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) offered through MRC for students with disabilities, including which students may be appropriate for these services
2. Establish collaborative practices between MRC vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and Local Educational Agency (LEA) personnel for the provision of Pre-ETS.

MRC provides two types of services for students with disabilities, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), and transition services through an Individualized Plan for Employment. Services may be provided directly by MRC or through a contracted service provider.

- All students with disabilities aged 14-21 (up to their 22nd birthday) may receive Pre-ETS, including but not limited to those receiving services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan, and are either eligible for MRC VR services or potentially eligible for MRC VR services. Pre-ETS are provided as generalized services to groups of students, or as individualized services.

MRC provides the five Pre-ETS services required under WIOA:

- Job exploration counseling.
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school, after-school, or community-based opportunities such as internships. Work-based learning experiences must be provided in an integrated setting in the community to the maximum extent possible.
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.

MRC makes Pre-ETS available to all students with disabilities statewide who are eligible or potentially eligible for MRC services. MRC will make every effort to provide or coordinate Pre-ETS services to ensure statewide availability.

MRC has counselors assigned to secondary institutions across the state. These counselors will review and discuss Pre-ETS service options with students and their families (if needed) to determine which services are most appropriate to meet the student's transition needs. MRC will provide and coordinate Pre-ETS services in collaboration with local educational agencies. MRC's contracted Pre-ETS service providers also work with MRC and schools across the state to obtain referrals for MRC Pre-ETS services.

1. Students with disabilities aged 14-21 (up to their 22nd birthday) who are determined eligible for MRC Vocational Rehabilitation services can receive additional transition services that are not considered Pre-ETS (beyond the scope of the five Pre-ETS services) through an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) while they are still in high school and receiving special education services, and also afterwards when seeking employment, in employment, or in postsecondary education or training. Transition services delivered through an IPE might consist of vocational guidance, work evaluation, skills training at a college or community rehabilitation program, assistive technology, adaptive equipment, and/or benefits counseling.
2. The IPE must be developed within 90 days or with an extension that is documented in the MRCIS case management system and approved by the MRC counselor and the student or Parent/Guardian. The IPE goal and appropriate services should be coordinated with a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan and include the provision of Pre-ETS. High school attendance and completion should be listed as a service on the IPE. The

IPE should be completed prior to high school exit for a student determined eligible for MRC services and not under an order of selection wait list.

The Administrative Advisory outlines the procedures in which MRC partners with LEAs to provide Pre-ETS as follows:

- MRC and LEA's are expected to maintain open and frequent communication between each other. High schools designate staff to facilitate sharing of information between MRC and the LEA.
- LEAs seek consultation and technical assistance from MRC VR counselors for LEA staff, students, and families. Consultation and assistance may be provided in-person or by using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls).
- LEAs will provide MRC staff with resources necessary for MRC's work, such as access to meeting space, work space, and Internet connection as needed.
- LEAs will collaborate with VR counselors to identify students with IEPs or 504 plans who may be appropriate for Pre-ETS. MRC will cooperate with LEAs to reach out to identified students as early as possible during the transition planning process and will provide the student and family with information about MRC Pre-ETS services, the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided.
- LEAs will inform the student, parent/guardian, and other IEP Team members of the availability of Pre-ETS provided by MRC, and connect the student and family with the VR counselor.
- LEAs will invite VR counselors to participate in IEP and 504 planning meetings, as appropriate, and with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority. When invited to participate in these planning meetings, MRC counselors will make every effort to participate.
- LEAs will share information e.g., student and family contact and information, student assessment data, Transition Planning Forms, IEPs, and 504 plans, with MRC counselor, with the prior consent of the family or student who has reached the age of majority, and as consistent with applicable student records laws.
- LEAs and MRC are expected to collaborate to plan Pre-ETS for students with IEPs that are coordinated with each student's individualized secondary transition services provided by the LEA. IEP teams are asked to document any agreed-upon VR services in the Action Plan of the Transition Planning Form, and may also document VR services in the Additional Information section of the IEP. LEAs and MRCs will collaborate to coordinate and deliver training activities and opportunities for students and families, where needed and appropriate. IEP documentation practices may vary among LEAs. See 34 CFR 300.154 and 34 CFR 300.324 regarding the relative responsibilities of LEAs and VR agencies to provide transition services.

## 2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

### A. Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

The Administrative Advisory outlines ongoing communication and collaboration and technical assistance between the DESE and the MRC at the state and local level. Designated staff from the

DESE and the MRC will communicate on a regular basis, to share information about legislative and regulatory changes and to review agency policy initiatives, resources, and other issues related to transition.

The following initiatives will foster local collaboration between the MRC's staff and LEAs:

#### Training and Guidance:

DESE and MRC staff will collaborate on transition training activities for students, families, educators, rehabilitation counselors, and other involved staff, where needed and appropriate. DESE and MRC staff at the state level will collaborate, as needed and appropriate, to produce joint guidance on WIOA, and local collaboration.

MRC and DESE have encouraged LEAs through the administrative advisory to provide MRC staff with resources necessary for MRC's work, such as access to meeting space, work space, and Internet connection as needed.

LEAs are asked to collaborate with VR counselors and contracted MRC Pre-ETS providers to identify all students with disabilities, including but not limited to those with IEPs or 504 plans who may be appropriate for Pre-ETS. MRC will cooperate with LEAs to identify students as early as possible during the transition planning process and will provide the student and family with information about MRC Pre-ETS services, the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided.

LEAs are asked to inform the student, parent/guardian, and other IEP Team members of the availability of Pre-ETS provided by MRC, and connect the student and family with the VR counselor.

LEAs are asked to invite VR counselors to participate in IEP and 504 planning meetings, and with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority. When invited to participate in these planning meetings, MRC counselors will make every effort to participate.

LEAs are asked to share information e.g., student and family contact and information, student assessment data, Transition Planning Forms, IEPs, and 504 plans, with MRC counselor, with the prior consent of the family or student who has reached the age of majority, and as consistent with applicable student records laws.

LEAs and MRC are expected to collaborate to plan Pre-ETS for students with IEPs that are coordinated with each student's individualized secondary transition services provided by the LEA. IEP Teams are asked to document any agreed-upon VR services in the Action Plan of the Transition Planning Form, and may also document VR services in the Additional Information section of the IEP. LEAs and MRCs will collaborate to coordinate and deliver training activities and opportunities for students and families, where needed and appropriate. IEP documentation practices may vary among LEAs. Any conversation regarding MRC Pre-ETS at the IEP meeting needs to be individualized to meet the student's needs.

The MRC has designated staff in Area Offices to work cooperatively with LEAs to coordinate Pre-ETS and transition planning and services, and to disseminate information to parents/legal guardians and students about the MRC transition process as early as the student's 14th birthday.

The MRC will provide consultation and technical assistance to LEAs, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conference and conference calls), to assist LEAs in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities and to coordinate Pre-ETS and other transition services. Pre-ETS can be provided to students who are eligible or potentially eligible for MRC VR services. If a student is determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, this consultation and technical assistance should result in the MRC's development of an Individualized Plan for Employment ("IPE") before the student leaves the school setting.

This consultation and technical assistance might include but is not limited to informational sessions with students, families/legal guardians, and school personnel regarding MRC Pre-ETS and VR

services, including referral and eligibility information; and assigning a counselor point of contact for each high school to provide information, receive referrals for Pre-ETS and VR services, and develop IPEs with students who are determined eligible for VR services.

## **B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;**

The administrative agreement covers compliance with state and federal laws and regulation for transition planning at the local level.

Under the agreement:

The DESE will provide ongoing guidance to LEAs regarding the responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education ("FAPE") to students eligible for special education and Section 504 accommodation plans, as mandated by federal and state law. Guidance will include the requirements that IEPs specify needed transition services; that special education transition services be provided for each eligible student beginning at age 14; that representatives of participating agencies be invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of the parent/legal guardian or student who has reached the age of majority; and that IEP Teams discuss the transfer of parental rights to the student at least one year before the student turns 18. The DESE will also provide guidance to LEAs to facilitate referrals to the appropriate agency for eligible students who will require ongoing supports and services from the adult service system.

On a regular basis, the DESE will monitor LEAs' development and use of policies and procedures, including those regarding Section 504 and the transition requirements of IDEA. All monitoring reports will be made publicly available on the DESE's web site. The DESE has provided guidance to LEAs, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, entitled "Administrative Advisory SPED 2017-1: Guidance Regarding the WIOA Prohibition on Contracting with Entities for the Purpose of Operating a Program Under Which a Youth with a Disability is Engaged in Subminimum Wage Employment" to inform LEAs that WIOA prohibits LEAs from entering into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in subminimum wage employment. The DESE assures that it will not enter such a contract or other arrangement.

## **C. Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) are mutually committed to promoting individualized transition services for students with disabilities that lead to successful post-school outcomes in competitive integrated employment, postsecondary education and training, independent living, and community participation.

MRC will contribute at least 15% of its financial resources towards providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities aged 14-21 (up to their 22nd birthday). The high schools will provide in-kind contributions of staff time, space, and transition services/resources. MRC will continue to work closely with DESE to ensure adequate financial resources are available in the schools for high school students.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools are responsible to provide secondary transition services in the areas of Postsecondary Education/Training, Competitive Employment, Independent Living, and Community Participation, as appropriate to the unique needs of

each student. In many cases, schools provide employment skills development as part of secondary transition services. The goal of Pre-ETS is to prepare students with disabilities for successful competitive, integrated employment.

Pre-ETS planning does not relieve LEAs or MRC of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that LEAs or MRC would otherwise provide to students with disabilities who are appropriate for Pre-ETS. For example, if the LEA ordinarily provides job exploration counseling to its students, that does not mean that the school should cease providing the service.

In cases where a question arises as to financial responsibility for services, MRC and the LEAs will work together to establish financial responsibilities, and have established a process for resolving disputes and for the coordination and timely delivery of services. MRC and LEAs will refer to state and federal laws, related regulations, and state and federal guidance to assist in resolving such issues in the best interest of the student.

In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by WIOA, nothing in this agreement will be construed to reduce the obligation under the IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) of a local educational agency (LEA) or any other agency to provide or pay for any transition services that are also considered special education or related services and that are necessary for ensuring a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities. In accordance with IDEA, nothing in this agreement relieves the MRC of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to students with disabilities who meet the MRC's eligibility criteria.

MRC has assigned qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to every public high school in the Commonwealth to coordinate the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services for potentially eligible or eligible students with disabilities aged 14-21 (up to their 22nd birthday) and transition services for students determined eligible for VR services delivered through an Individualized Plan for Employment. The LEAs assign qualified education staff to coordinate communication with MRC and to provide transition services under IDEA and 504. Applicable administrative staff are also involved in this process. MRC contracted Pre-ETS providers also work closely with schools and MRC staff as part of this process.

MRC and DESE have coordinated efforts with LEAs to address documentation requirements for students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment (in accordance with 34 CFR Part 397). MRC has developed documentation forms, and has coordinated with DESE to develop and implement a process to ensure these forms are provided to MRC by LEAs in accordance with these requirements, and subsequently documented in MRC's Section 511 database.

## **D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.**

The MRC Area Offices will provide outreach to high schools to assist in informing all students with disabilities aged 14-21 (up to their 22nd birthday) of the availability of MRC Pre-ETS and Vocational Rehabilitation services. Outreach to these students occurs as early as possible in the transition process. MRC outreach information includes a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, applicable eligibility requirements, referral and application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible and potentially eligible individuals. Contracted MRC Pre-ETS providers will also participate in this outreach process to identify students for MRC Pre-ETS services.

LEAs also collaborate with VR counselors to identify all students with disabilities who may be appropriate for Pre-ETS. MRC will cooperate with LEAs to identify students as early as possible during the transition planning process and will provide the student and family with information about the purpose of the VR and Pre-ETS programs, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided.

## e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission does not have any formal cooperative agreements with private non-profit organizations. MRC does work closely with nonprofits across the Commonwealth.

MRC has for many years worked in partnership with private nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to develop a wide array of programs and services to assist people with disabilities to achieve suitable employment outcomes. The MRC and CRPs have collaborated to develop programs including: Vocational Services; Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES), contracted Pre-Employment Transition Service programs (Pre-ETS), and a wide array of support services essential in vocational rehabilitation.

MRC's collaborative relationship with its CRP partners have been achieved through open communication, sharing of ideas and resources, mutual support and understanding and inclusiveness of all partners in the development of and implementation of service design.

The MRC develops programs and services with the participation of providers in several forums as described below:

1. Statewide Rehabilitation Council that meets quarterly.
2. Meetings with representatives of the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers.
3. Periodic district wide meetings with community rehabilitation programs.
4. Interagency and cross—disability agency councils.
5. Task specific work teams.

MRC contracts with Qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) as part of the Competitive Integrated Employment Service (CIES) program. The CIES program is a procurement of a set of contracted services available for all individuals with disabilities served by the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Qualified CRPs provide the services to MRC consumers.

The MRC/CIES procurement program provides employment services for VR participants, and additionally through State funding the availability for extended ongoing supports after closure. CIES comprises six service components, each associated with a specific service outcome. Specific service components are provided to consumers based on their individualized needs. Through the component based service delivery system, consumers are able to receive the comprehensive individualized services and supports they need to achieve and maintain successful employment. CIES services may carry over from year to year, with approximately 30% of consumers completing their program each year. CIES is often used to assist individuals with complex disabilities or situations into integrated employment opportunities with competitive wages paid by an employer.

CIES procurement service components include: Career Exploration and Engagement; Employment-Based Skills Training/Work Experiences; Job Development and Placement; Initial Employment Support services, Interim Flexible Supports (including peer support and job coaching), and Ongoing Employment Support services.

Providers are paid on a performance basis during the initiation and completion phases of services. Using a data management and billing system called EIM (Enterprise Invoice Management), and internal tracking, the MRC CIES team tracks program enrollment, expenditure and outcomes.

MRC has recently completed a new procurement for CIES services which took effect on July 1, 2019. MRC made adjustments to the CIES model based on lessons learned and input from its staff, CRP partners, and other stakeholders. These adjustments are designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CIES services for MRC consumers. MRC also incorporated peer support and flexible supports into the CIES procurement and has developed key performance indicators for CIES and CIES-ACCS. The CIES procurement is set to be a rolling RFR which opens four times a year to allow recruitment of additional vendors providing flexibility and maximum access for services.

MRC is also working closely with CRPs on a new collaborative effort with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to provide contracted employment services as a part of the CIES procurement program for consumers participating in the Department of Mental Health's Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model. This program began in July 2019. As part of MRC ACCS services through the CIES procurement program, MRC has entered into Business Associate Agreements (BAAs) with CIES ACCS providers to assist with facilitating and coordinating services between MRC, DMH, and providers for participating consumers.

MRC also works with CRPs and other nonprofits such as the Independent Living Centers through its Pre-Employment Transition Service (Pre-ETS) contracts. These contracts provide work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, job exploration counseling, instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring, and counseling on enrollment in post-secondary education. MRC recently completed a new procurement for contracted Pre-ETS services which took effect on July 1, 2019. This new procurement is designed in the long term to allow MRC to be able to serve more students and provide students with exposure to the world of work. This approach focuses on: 1) increasing the student's awareness of the world of work and their own employment interests, skills, and needs; 2) providing exploration and exposure opportunities related to work experiences; and 3) better preparing students for employment and postsecondary success. This approach is tiered to ensure that students of all abilities can access and engage in Pre-ETS services based on their interests and needs.

## f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The MRC Supported Employment Program provides Supported Employment Services to consumers statewide through its Area Offices and through a network of qualified community rehabilitation providers. MRC has developed links with the local school system for transitioning youth, and other state agencies such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health (DMH), through its clubhouse programs and through the new collaboration with DMH on Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS).

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission continues to promote the collaboration with stakeholders regarding supported employment services and extended services. This is also evidenced in the number of joint funded programs that have been established. Some examples of these collaborative programs are joint funding of services for individuals with intellectual disabilities between the MRC and the Developmental Disability Services (DDS); for individuals with mental health needs between MRC and the Department of Mental Health (DMH); for individuals who have traumatic brain injuries between the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

MRC has Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with DDS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). These MOUs are designed to improve collaboration, coordination and utilization of joint agency resources in ensuring quality service delivery and long term supports that result in competitive/supported employment outcomes for mutual consumers. This collaboration is at the

Regional and local levels. Through developing a process for conducting joint-service planning, local liaisons/training and joint service planning, all consumers and specifically transition aged individuals be better served and able to achieve successful employment outcomes.

Evidence of Collaboration regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services:

MRC provides supported employment services through its Area Offices across the commonwealth. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has developed a process to provide extended support services to assist individuals with disabilities in maintaining and advancing in their careers utilizing state funding, comparable benefits, and natural supports for long-term extended support services after federal funds can no longer be used. Paid extended supports are provided through a network of qualified community rehabilitation providers as well as partnering with other state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Developmental services.

Funding for extended long term support services is available from several sources depending on the nature of the consumer's disability and the resources available. Sources include:

1. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission State Ongoing Support Funding
2. IRS Section 44
3. Department of Mental Health
4. Department of Developmental Services
5. Private Sector Business Natural Supports
6. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Statewide Head Injury Program
7. Social Security Work Incentives/PASS Plan
8. Impairment-Related Work Expenses
9. Natural Supports or supports from an employer
10. Other Comparable Benefits
11. Medicaid Waiver Supported Employment Services
12. Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

## g. Coordination with Employers

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

### 1. VR Services; and

MRC's Job Placement Unit operates a robust account management system that is designed for MRC to hear first from employers regarding their specific labor market needs. This gives MRC staff access to job openings that we can assist individuals with disabilities in meeting their employment goals as well as assisting our employer partners by providing them with access to qualified individuals to help fulfill their staffing needs. As part of this system, MRC has several employer advisory boards strategically located across the Commonwealth through which we receive labor market information and to collaborate on strategies for hiring of people with disabilities. MRC's account management system involves numerous employers across the Commonwealth in a variety of different sectors. There are statewide employer partners as well as local employer partners we work with, including those in STEM occupations such as Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, Partners Health Care, among others. Many of these partners participate in MRC's employer advisory board meetings.

MRC produces a labor market summary for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and analyzes placement and employment trends on an annual basis by Standard Occupational Code. MRC also tracks information on labor force participation and unemployment for people with disabilities in comparison to those without disabilities. MRC continues its efforts to strengthen agency use of labor market information and continues to strive to reduce the gap in labor force participation between people with and without disabilities. Going forward, MRC plans to continue working with its workforce partners, including the MassHire Career Centers and Local Workforce Investment Boards to analyze labor market trends and statistics to identify job sectors to focus outreach efforts on. MRC also uses its Employer Advisory Board network and other marketing efforts to promote MRC's employer services and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

Employer feedback has led MRC to operate an annual statewide hiring event to help connect a talent pool with the needs of our employer partners. MRC also holds regular local office briefings with employers on local labor needs. All of these enhance the agency's knowledge on local and statewide labor market needs. MRC utilizes job matching tools such as ResuMate to assist with job matching efforts to accommodate the needs of our consumers and employer partners.

MRC participates in a business strategy workgroup between key workforce partners as part of the Commonwealth's effort to coordinate services to employers amongst partner agencies. MRC subscribes to the established key principles to guide business services amongst key partner agencies and will continue to work closely with WIOA core partners to expand services to employers.

MRC is continuing to target new employers and expand its employer account management system. Examples include job driven training programs with multiple employers, such as the MRC Pharmacy Technician Training Program in direct partnership with CVS Health, and a job driven training program with Home Depot, among others. MRC also is an active member of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)'s National Employment Team network, which strives to create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations. The National Employment Network team also comprises the Talent Acquisition Portal providing access to jobs across the country and connects with national employers

MRC's Placement Team also has a very active and vibrant partnership with the Mass PCA Program, with over 38 hires and growing. This program also offers CNA training and other career options and trainings. These trainings are free to consumers. MRC also works with registered Apprenticeship Programs in the state to secure apprenticeships for consumers.

MRC's Job Placement Unit operates an annual Federal Hiring Event in partnership with MCB, and other workforce partners, and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) in their Boston and Hartford offices to assist consumers with securing competitive employment comparable with their interests and abilities. MRC prepares consumers to interview for available jobs with employers participating in the event. This is a hiring event that focuses on direct job placement with participating employers. It differs from a career fair because consumers must apply for at least one job for which they are qualified to be eligible to participate. Employers are motivated to hire because they are presented with a set of diverse, qualified individuals from whom they can select to fill vacancies. In 2019, MRC completed its 7th annual Hiring Event. Since 2013, Over 480 individuals have been successfully employed across the Commonwealth through participating in this annual one-day event. The aggregate annual wages of all successfully employed consumers through the hiring event since 2013 is approximately \$10.31 million. Consumers have been employed in a variety of occupations ranging from office and administrative support, health care, protective service, human services, and management occupations, amongst others.

#### Job-Driven Trainings:

MRC is committed to the use of industry-based training to assist its consumers in finding competitive employment opportunities through employer engagement. Over the past 8 years, MRC has conducted over 1,000 OJTs with employers and approximately 500 consumers have completed Job-Driven trainings with MRC employer partners. MRC continues to develop and utilize Job-Driven Trainings

(JDT) and on-the-job (OJT) training and evaluations. MRC has created job driven training programs to date with the Home Depot, CVS Health, Lowes, G4S Security Solutions, the Kraft Group, MAPFRE Insurance, Advance Auto Parts, and Enterprise Holdings, and Allied Universal Security Services, amongst other employers. In addition, MRC holds job-driven trainings for human service jobs, and has started to offer a job-driven training for IT jobs. MRC is also exploring a cyber security job-driven training program partnership with CISCO Academy, and is working on developing new job-driven training programs with Travelers Insurance, and BJ's Wholesale Club, and developing new partnerships with UPS and Fed Ex. MRC has found that many consumers who participate in an OJT or Job-Driven training obtain employment with the OJT or JDT. Other participants are able to obtain employment elsewhere as a result of their participation in the OJT or JDT because they gained a recent work experience and/or developed job-specific skills.

MRC also holds annual employer trainings to strengthen relationships with existing employers and to develop new ones. The intent of these trainings include promoting MRC's employment services to employers, encouraging employer partners of MRC to promote the hiring of people with disabilities to other employers and reducing stigmas related to employment of people with disabilities.

As part of MRC's Empower to Employ Program in partnership with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), MRC has hired dedicated Employment Service Specialist staff for this project and MRC is developing an employer summit for jointly served consumers between MRC and DTA. The goal is to develop options for individuals who may have limited work experiences. One strategy would be to work with employers and staffing agencies to develop short term work options and experiences.

## 2. Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

MRC continues to work with employers to coordinate transition services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students and youths with disabilities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

MRC has created internship opportunities for high school students with disabilities in partnership with employers across the Commonwealth as part of its Pre-ETS programming.

In addition, MRC staff coordinate with MRC Pre-ETS providers and with employers to provide work experiences such as internships and job tours for students and youths with disabilities receiving VR and/or Pre-Employment Transition Services through MRC. These services provide paid work-based learning experiences and workplace readiness training. It also provides valuable work experience and mentorship opportunities for participants. Employers are involved as part of identifying work-based learning experiences for Pre-ETS and as part of MRC's Transition Pathway Services federal demonstration grant. MRC is in the final two years of this grant; as part of this demonstration grant, MRC is working closely with the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston to evaluate progress and to develop and promote best practices for Pre-ETS and Work-Based learning. MRC is also collaborating with Work Without Limits at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center to coordinate with employers to provide work-based learning experiences for TPS grant students. MRC will use lessons from this grant to incorporate best practices for coordinating Pre-Employment Transition Services and transition services to students and youths with disabilities.

## h. Interagency Cooperation

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

# 1. The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;

MRC and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Office of Medicaid, the state agency responsible for administering the state's Medicaid program have a well-established and long-standing relationship. MRC and the EOHHS' Office of Medicaid are committed to the promotion of independence and self-sufficiency through access to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) services for individuals with disabilities.

MRC and the Office of Medicaid have developed and signed a Cooperative Agreement to work collaboratively to promote the provision of services and long-term supports for individuals with disabilities who require such services to obtain and maintain competitive employment in accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). The Cooperative Agreement will be revised as needed in the future.

This Cooperative Agreement is in accordance with Section 412(a)(7)(H) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, which requires a state's VR agency to have a formal cooperative agreement with the state's Medicaid agency with respect to the delivery of VR services for individuals who have been determined to be eligible for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) under a Medicaid HCBS waiver.

MRC and EOHHS' Office of Medicaid, through joint planning and sharing of information, will collaborate to promote access to competitive integrated employment and will work to increase the number of successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities needing, and eligible to receive, long-term supports in order to find and keep a job.

MRC provides the following services to individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services, based on individual needs:

1. vocational assessment
2. vocational counseling and guidance
3. funds for training/education, job placement
4. follow-up supports after training.

EOHHS through its Office of Medicaid administers, and MRC serves as the Operating Agency for, certain HCBS Waivers through which individuals with disabilities may receive long term services and supports in the community. The availability of such supports works to enable individuals with disabilities to achieve independence and economic self-sufficiency in the community. Many individuals receiving VR services from MRC are also enrolled in Mass Health (the state Medicaid program) and through Mass Health are supported in their efforts to live and work as independently as possible in the community.

Through participation in one of MassHealth's HCBS waivers and/or utilization of MassHealth State Plan services, disabled MassHealth members may receive services that support their efforts to obtain competitive integrated employment. These services may include, as appropriate:

1. Community Living Supports: A range of MassHealth state plan and HCBS waiver services that enable an individual to live in the community as an alternative to institutional care and which may include such services as home health aide, homemaker services, individualized home supports, independent living supports, home/environmental accessibility modifications, and personal care.
2. Pre-vocational Services: A range of learning and experiential type activities that prepare an individual for paid or unpaid employment in an integrated, community setting. Services may include teaching such concepts as attendance, task completion, problem solving and safety

as well as social skills training, improving attention span and developing or improving motor skills.

Additionally, the following services may be available to eligible individuals receiving VR services from MRC or who are enrolled in a MassHealth HCBS waiver, subject to the rules and regulations governing each program:

1. Vehicle Modification
2. Transportation
3. Home/environmental accessibility modification
4. Supported Employment Services

Designated MRC and EOHHS Office of Medicaid staff will communicate on an ongoing basis to share information about legislative and regulatory changes and to review agency policy initiatives, resources, and other issues related to long term supports for mutual consumers under a MassHealth HCBS waiver program.

## 2. The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

MRC and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) work collaboratively to assist individuals with developmental disabilities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MRC and DDS have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to work collaboratively through joint planning and sharing of resources to expand access to integrated employment services to increase the number of successful job placements for individuals with intellectual disabilities, especially those of transition age who have a goal of competitive employment. The MOA will be reviewed annually by the leadership of both agencies to identify areas for clarification, improvement, or additions to further promote collaboration and successful employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities eligible for services from both agencies.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Department of Developmental Services through joint planning, and sharing of resources, are working to expand access to integrated employment services and increase the number of successful job placements for individuals with intellectual disabilities, in particular those individuals of transition age, who have a goal of competitive employment and are eligible for services from both agencies.

MRC and DDS are working to achieve the following outcomes through collaboration:

1. Increase the number of transition age individuals with intellectual disabilities who obtain and maintain competitive employment.
2. Improved collaboration, coordination and utilization of joint agency resources in ensuring quality service delivery and long term supports that result in competitive employment outcomes for our mutual consumers. This will include funding from MRC for the up- front employment services and a commitment from DDS for funding of the long-term, ongoing employment support services to help individuals successfully maintain competitive job placements.
3. Adherence to the DDS Home and Community Based Waiver Program requirements for the delivery of supported employment services.
4. Improved outreach, communication and coordination with local schools, individuals with developmental disabilities, families, employers and other stake holders in serving our mutual consumers.
5. Enhanced communication between DDS and MRC.

#### Criteria for mutual MRC/DDS consumers:

1. Individuals who have been determined eligible for MRC Vocational Rehabilitation services by an MRC counselor who are also receiving services from the Department of Developmental Services.
2. Individuals who have a goal of employment in an individual, competitive, integrated job working full-time or part-time. (Individuals would be hired by the business/employer, earning at least minimum wage and eligible for the benefits other employees in similar positions receive.)
3. Individuals who can benefit from the employment services provided by MRC to reach their employment goal. This includes individuals who may need long-term, ongoing, job supports from DDS to enable them to successfully maintain employment.

MRC and DDS are targeting individuals aged 18 to 22 who are moving from school to adult life, and individuals up to age 24. With a particular focus on assisting students/young adults who have had work experience while in school, MRC and DDS assists them in directly entering a job upon completion of school and/or to maintain a job obtained during their last year of school. With adults who are over the age of 24, who are eligible for services from both DDS and MRC and have a goal of working in competitive employment, the agencies provide similar services.

#### Referral Process from DDS to MRC:

1. For students, the DDS Area Office/Transition Coordinator will make a referral to the local MRC office at least one year before the student is scheduled to leave school.
2. MRC counselors may also identify individuals who have been referred to their agency for services to determine if they are also DDS eligible, and will contact the local DDS Area Office to confirm eligibility.

#### Services Provided:

1. Both the DDS Transition/Service Coordinator and MRC Counselor will be participating members of relevant individual planning team processes, (including IEP—Individual Education Plan; ITP—Individual Transition Plan; IPE— Individual Plan for Employment; ISP— Individual Support Plan).
2. Individuals may be eligible for the full array of services available through MRC based on MRC policy and their needs.
3. Based on an individual's needs, it is expected that MRC will fund the upfront employment services which may include assessment, skills training, job placement, and initial job coaching and on-the-job supports.
4. For individuals who will require ongoing job coaching and employment supports to successfully maintain employment, DDS will provide funding for these long-term, ongoing employment services. These services will be provided by DDS after the individuals exit MRC services, which will not occur before the 90-day job retention period.

#### Communication and Coordination of Services between Agencies:

1. There will be regular communication between MRC and DDS local area staff to facilitate collaboration, joint planning for service delivery, cross-agency information sharing and training to ensure all parties have current information about agency policies and practices including those related to referrals, eligibility requirements, and other pertinent information.
2. Area Directors and/or other lead designated staff will identify a process for identifying referrals and for regular communication to monitor services and other collaborative initiatives.

3. MRC and DDS have worked to clarify the expected responsibilities and roles of staff in each agency to support local service planning and service delivery. This will be determined by DDS and MRC managers at the local level. It is expected that both the MRC counselor and DDS Service Coordinator will work closely together with individuals when joint services are being provided, communicating regularly, participating in planning meetings, etc., to ensure an integrated and responsive approach when working with individuals and their families/guardians. This will promote a strong partnership to assist in addressing problems or concerns that might arise both on-the-job and outside of work that may have an impact on performance, as well as facilitate planning for ongoing employment support.
4. MRC counselors and DDS staff will abide by agency practices regarding regular communication, participation in planning meetings and collaboration in ensuring an integrated and responsive approach to working with consumers, their families/guardians and other community resources.

#### Reporting/Data Collection:

A system for tracking the services provided to individuals jointly eligible for MRC and DDS services has been developed and implemented in order to assess the referrals, outcomes, impact and effectiveness of services provided to individuals who receive services as part of the MOA. Each MRC and DDS Area Office will be required to provide documentation on a regular basis.

### 3. The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) both recognize that employment is essential to the independence, dignity, and recovery of persons with serious mental illness and continue to work collaboratively to increase employment opportunities and positive employment outcomes for the individuals they mutually serve. Through enhanced interagency communications throughout their organizational structure, engaging in joint service planning at the individual and program levels, and formalizing a plan for ongoing collaboration, MRC and DMH are working collaboratively to coordinate and improve services to shared consumers to assist them in their efforts to obtain employment and live independently in the community.

MRC and DMH have developed a Memorandum of Understanding to guide efforts to work collaboratively to identify the individuals that they mutually serve through implementing an ongoing data collection system, to foster joint service planning and interagency training to increase employment opportunities and positive employment outcomes for individuals with severe mental illness. The MOU will be revised as needed. In addition, MRC and DMH have undertaken a new initiative as of July 2019 where MRC coordinates employment services for individuals with mental health needs served by the Department of Mental Health's Adult Clinical Community Services (ACCS) program in collaboration with DMH and its vendors. MRC entered an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) and a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) with DMH to provide funding for MRC ACCS services.

The new MRC/DMH Employment Initiative is designed to build an integrated employment framework that inspires and engages innovation to ensure full employment for people with mental health needs at the same rate of employment as the general population. The focus of this initiative is on individuals served by DMH through Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS). These individuals are being referred to MRC for Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services. To serve these individuals, MRC is using an Integrated Resource Team approach, where partner agencies and supports come together to craft and jointly own a job seeker's employment goal, to coordinate wrap-around services and ongoing collaboration and communication. MRC has hired dedicated staff with funding through the ISA to work with ACCS referrals. These counselors will have smaller caseloads and will work with CIES providers, DMH providers, DMH, and other MRC staff to rapidly engage with consumers, develop a plan for employment, and coordinate services designed to assist these consumers in achieving successful employment outcomes.

The MOU and ISA outline collaboration between MRC and DMH as follows:

1. Through the MOU and through the ACCS initiative, MRC and DMH have developed a system for ongoing collaboration and communication at the local and state level.
2. MRC and DMH continue to work on ways to enhance systems to regularly identify the individuals they mutually serve, in general and for the ACCS initiative.
3. MRC and DMH continue to implement processes that will facilitate DMH and MRC timely referring to each other individuals who could benefit from receiving both MRC and DMH services, including consumers to be referred to MRC for MRC ACCS services.
4. MRC and DMH continue to develop and implement a process for conducting joint-service planning for individuals mutually served by both agencies to enhance the individuals' employment opportunities. For consumers participating in the ACCS initiative, the Integrated Resource Team approach will be used to develop and coordinate services, including wrap around services.
5. To promote referrals, consultations regarding referrals and joint-service planning when appropriate, MRC and DMH will continue to ensure that all staff at both agencies and service provider staff are informed and trained on the services the respective agencies provide.
6. MRC and DMH have implemented an ongoing data sharing agreement to track employment service delivery and the outcomes associated with mutually served individuals and to help the Agencies assess the effectiveness of their collaboration. Additionally, the ISA for the ACCS initiative outlines key performance indicators and data collection areas to track services and outcomes for the new MRC-DMH Employment Initiative. These indicators will be used to track outcomes and improve services.
7. Continue to explore, develop, and implement further joint initiatives beneficial to the individuals mutually served by the Agencies, including but not limited to the pursuit of new resources.
8. Consumer Input. MRC and DMH acknowledge the importance of consumer input and will incorporate such input in the evaluation of their collaborative efforts.

Local Liaisons/Training/Joint Service Planning:

1. Each DMH Site Office, DMH facility, and MRC Area Office will designate a liaison(s) to serve as a central point of contact and resource for the other Agency.

The liaison will:

1. Provide their counterparts with information about and answer questions regarding their Agency's eligibility or referral process and the services they provide.
2. Provide guidance to and/or confer with their counterparts, or designees, about the appropriateness of referring a specific individual served by one of the Agencies to the other for additional services; and when appropriate, helping to facilitate the filing and processing of the required application or referral forms.

Referrals between agencies:

MRC and DMH have agreed:

Referrals to MRC from DMH shall be made in good faith with the reasonable expectation that the person referred is interested in competitive, integrated employment, has the potential to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, including supported employment services, in order to achieve competitive employment.

Referrals to DMH from MRC shall be made in good faith with the reasonable expectation that the person referred is interested in, and in need of the services DMH offers, and is likely to meet criteria for DMH services.

MRC and DMH have agreed to mutually facilitate the coordination of employment related services provided by DMH, MRC or contracted providers to individuals mutually served by the Agencies; assist in resolving issues that may arise regarding an application for services, a referral for services and/or the coordination of care; notify or ensure notification to their counterpart/and/or the referral source as to the outcome of an application or referral filed on behalf of an individual being served by the other agency; and ensure that the agencies MOU contact persons have updated contact information for them.

#### Training:

DMH and MRC, subject to available funding, have sponsored a statewide MRC/DMH Training and Collaboration Forum for employees of DMH and will hold further trainings as needed. The purpose of the forum is to further the goals of the MOU. DMH will provide a representative for planning and consultative purposes for MRC's Annual Mental Health Liaison Forum. MRC and DMH will continue to conduct ongoing training on the ACCS employment initiative as it evolves.

#### Joint Service Planning:

At the State Level: DMH and MRC operate a workgroup staffed by both agencies and contracted providers, as applicable, to establish protocols for the Agencies that will ensure that the care of mutually served individuals in need of enhanced support to obtain or retain competitive employment will be coordinated to the extent practical and feasible. MRC and DMH also work closely together on the state level on the MRC-DMH ACCS Employment Initiative. At the Regional Level, each DMH Area Director and MRC District Director or their designee, meet with their counterparts regularly to discuss the new MRC-DMH Employment Initiative, any communication or collaboration issues, and to address opportunities for additional collaborations.

At the Local Level: DMH Site Directors and MRC Area Directors, Supervisors, and MRC ACCS counselors ensure that regular and as needed communications occur between MRC and DMH to facilitate collaboration on the MRC-DMH Employment Initiative and other efforts, joint planning for service delivery, and cross agency information sharing.

## i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

### 1. System on Personnel and Personnel Development

#### A. Qualified Personnel Needs

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

i. The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

The MRC tracks and maintains staffing information by classification, vacancy rate and information to determine its staffing level based on the distribution of new referrals and active clients. This information is updated regularly.

The Commission currently employs 422 individuals in the VR Program. Of this number, 261 are VR counselors and first line supervisors, 28 are managers and 133 are program, technical, or administrative staff. All numbers represent full and part-time staff, not FTE. 24% of MRC staff are from minority backgrounds, 74% are women, 15% are persons with disabilities, and 3% are Veterans.

Most counselors carry "general caseloads" consisting of consumers representing all disability populations; a smaller number of counselors carry "specialty" caseloads consisting primarily of consumers with the same/similar disabilities (i.e., severe mobility impairments, psychiatric disabilities), including dedicated counselors for the deaf and hard of hearing and for particular language groups. MRC actively served 24,991 consumers in SFY2019/PY2018. The average caseload size per VR counselor was 106 for SFY2019/PY2018.

## ii. The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

MRC monitors the number of active consumers and its available resources on an ongoing basis and sets its staffing pattern based on these factors. The MRC will act as needed to ensure sufficient staff to serve the caseload based on the projected number of consumers with active individualized employment plans (IPEs) based on available resources and review from the leadership team.

MRC projects it will need to maintain a staffing level of 442 individuals (427.5 FTEs in the VR Program. Of this number, 264 (259.5 FTEs) are VR counselor, first line supervisors and placement unit staff, 42 (41.4 FTEs) are managers and 133 (126.6 FTEs) are program, technical, or administrative staff, and 3 benefits specialists funded through VR.

## iii. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Over the next 5 years, MRC will continue to monitor the number of active consumers and its available resources and will set its staffing pattern based on these factors. The MRC will act as needed to ensure sufficient staff to serve the caseload based on the projected number of consumers with active individualized employment plans (IPEs) based on available resources and review from the leadership team.

MRC continues to experience turnover as a result of retirements of counselors, supervisors, and managers. It appears this trend will begin to decrease as we move into the mid-2020s. MRC is expecting approximately 40-50 counselors, supervisors, and administrative staff in the VR program to retire or leave the agency over the next five years. MRC has developed a workforce plan with strategies to backfill critical positions across the VR program and is working on strategies to develop a more mobile workforce with new technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our staff and the employment experience of consumers.

MRC projects it will need to maintain a staffing level of 442 individuals in the VR Program. Of this number, 264 (259.5 FTEs), are VR counselor, first line supervisors and placement unit staff, 42 (41.4 FTEs) are managers and 133 (126.6 FTEs) are program, technical, or administrative staff, and 3 benefits specialists funded through VR.

## B. Personnel Development

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

i. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

Universities in Massachusetts that have Rehabilitation Counseling programs at the bachelor and masters' level are: University of Massachusetts at Boston, Springfield College and Assumption College. Salve Regina is located in Rhode Island.

ii. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

In a given academic year, upwards of 100 undergraduate students and 125 graduate students are enrolled in degree programs either full-time or part-time as rehabilitation "majors" at the colleges and universities referenced.

A breakdown of the students per institution enrolled and majoring rehabilitation counseling programs is as follows:

Undergraduate:

Assumption College: 40

University of Massachusetts - Boston: 30

Springfield College: 25

Salve Regina University: 5

Graduate:

Assumption College: 50

University of Massachusetts - Boston: 35

Springfield College: 30

Salve Regina University: 10

iii. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Each year, upwards of 50 undergraduate students are awarded the Bachelor's degree and upwards of 60 graduate-level students graduate with credentials to qualify for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification and/or licensure by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts broken down by institution as follows:

Assumption College: 20 undergraduate students, 25 graduate students

University of Massachusetts - Boston: 15 undergraduate students, 18 graduate students

Springfield College: 10 undergraduate students, 12 graduate students

Salve Regina University: 5 undergraduate students, 5 graduate students

## 2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

The MRC's plan for recruitment includes meeting with representatives from the Commission's Staff Development Department. It will continue to communicate on a quarterly basis with officials of the CORE accredited rehabilitation departments and officials responsible for minority outreach at Assumption College, Springfield College, Salve Regina, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston regarding pertinent information on the preparation of rehabilitation professionals and for the specific purpose of recruiting graduates for employment in the federal/state VR Program. Special emphasis will be given to students with disabilities and students from minority backgrounds. Additionally, Commission staff also regularly address rehabilitation students in the classroom setting providing them with an overview of the agency and the public rehabilitation program. Internal job postings are automatically sent to these institutions informing them of job openings and procedures to apply. A number of rehabilitation students have completed their field placement and practicum experience within the Commission affording them a realistic view of work in the Commission.

MRC has also sent a letter of support to Springfield College as part of their application to provide long term training support to Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals and will collaborate with Springfield College if they are awarded funding in this area.

The Commission also maintains relationships with nearly 40 minority referral sources and routinely forwards all job postings to them thereby encouraging application for employment at all job levels from persons from minority backgrounds. Position openings can be advertised in newspapers (i.e. Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Worcester Telegram and Gazette) and posted internally and externally on the Internet (MASSCareers, Indeed, Monster, SimplyHired, and LinkedIn). Indeed in particular would pull our jobs from a variety of posted locations and sources.

## 3. Personnel Standards

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

**A. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is utilizing a state approved certified Human Resource Division classification standard, to recruit and employ qualified counseling staff as required by WIOA. There are three levels of classifications in the Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) series. Incumbents of classifications in this series administer functional, skills analysis and other vocational assessment tests; review and analyze diagnostic information through tests, records, interviews and observations; develop, implement and monitor Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs); and provide job placement assistance and job development skills.

The basic purpose of this work is to evaluate individuals with physical, emotional or other impairments or multi-impairments to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act. QVRC- I is an entry-level position. QVRC- II is the fully competent level classification in the series and QVRC III is a supervisory level position. The following is the state certified Human Resource Division classification standard to recruit and employ qualified counseling staff as required by WIOA. MRC also has slightly different postings for QVRC IIs for Job Placement Specialists and for Mental Health Specialty QVRC for the MRC-DMH Employment Initiative. MRC also has an Employment Service Specialist (ESS) position.

#### 1. QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR I:

**Distinguishing Characteristics:** This is the entry-level classification in this series. Incumbents perform work under guidance and within a framework of defined policies, procedures and standards. Incumbents seek guidance and advice from more experienced colleagues and focus on gaining the knowledge and experience to perform more independently and participate in work of a higher complexity.

**Supervision Received:** Incumbents receive close supervision from employees of a higher grade who provide direction, training, instruction, work assignments and frequent reviews of performance through formal and informal verbal and written reports for effectiveness and conformance to laws, rules, regulations and agency policies.

Incumbents may receive general direction from other work units to ensure accuracy and compliance with funding requirements.

**Supervision Exercised:** Incumbents may provide functional guidance to new employees. **Functions Performed:** At this level, Incumbents are expected to perform one or more of the following:

Conduct intake interviews with consumers who have physical, emotional, psychiatric or other disabilities to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. Determine eligibility through review and analysis of records, tests, observations and interviews, to identify consumers' needs and occupational interests and abilities, and to assist with securing competitive employment. Make recommendations on appropriate programs and treatment interventions based on evaluation of needs. Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for consumers, including rehabilitation teaching, social rehabilitation orientation, physical and mental restoration, vocational and on-the-job training, educational services, and pre- and post-employment services. Maintain accurate records using information technology resources. Develop and maintain working relationships with public and private organizations, including employers, service providers, career centers and community groups to exchange information and resolve problems, to promote agency services and to evaluate the suitability of educational programs and employment and other consumer placement resources. Represent the agency in dealing with community groups, public and private organizations, vendors and other public agencies. Conduct individual skills training sessions based on the IPE to ensure that the needs of the consumers are being met. Conduct group workshops for consumers to prepare for job opportunities, and coordinate the methods, materials and equipment used in training sessions. Monitor and evaluate consumer progress through individual meetings and on-site visits to ensure that the needs of the consumers are being met. Prepare and maintain case and progress notes for general information and to document and monitor changes to an individual's overall progress. Explain and answer inquiries made by consumers and/or their families and other interested parties relating to agency programs, objectives and services. Monitor and evaluate the consumer's progress through individual meetings, on-site visits and review of reports to assist consumer adjustment to new situations and determine whether services, programs or job placement is meeting the needs of the consumer.

**Key Accountabilities:** Incumbents at this level have the decision-making authority to:

Recommend how to proceed with the job referral process. Determine accommodation and training needs that may be required in the workplace and determine if training or other employer intervention strategies are needed post- placement in order to maintain consumer placement. Recommend purchase of equipment and materials including Assistive Technology for job placement. Recommend

consumers to employers for employment opportunities. Prioritize cases/workflow. Develop, implement and monitor IPE with the consumer.

**Relationships with Others:** Key contacts and relationships for incumbents include consumers and their families/legal guardians; supervisors and agency managers and staff; medical professionals; legal officials; vendors and contractors; and community members and/or organizations involved with consumers and/or their families/legal guardians.

**Working Environment:** While performing the duties of this classification, incumbents work both in an office and at employer sites. Incumbents may be exposed to moving mechanical parts, vibration causing tools or equipment, fumes, airborne particles or toxic or caustic chemicals, outside weather conditions and loud noises when visiting sites. Incumbents may also be exposed to verbal and/or physical confrontations. Incumbents are required to travel in the state and may be exposed to traffic and other road-way hazards.

**Physical Abilities:** While performing the duties of this classification in an office setting, incumbents are regularly required to sit for long periods of time, communicate effectively and use information technology resources to process work assignments. Incumbents may be required to transport, move or install 25 pounds of office supplies or equipment (for example paper or case files) with or without assistance and with or without the use of devices or equipment to assist with the effort. Work assignments may be performed with or without reasonable accommodation to a known disability.

**Knowledge, Education and Experience:** Applicants must have a (A) Master's degree or higher in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited university program, or a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor or (B) the substitution listed below.

Based on assignment, travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must have a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

**Substitutions:**

I. A Master's degree or higher in a related field such a Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Disability Studies, Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Work, Human Services, Education, Special Education, Occupational Therapy, Counseling (Mental Health, Education, Psychology), or Substance Abuse Therapy and one (1) year of full- time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers may be substituted for the required (A) education. Relevant internship experience will be considered.

Incumbents are required to have the following at the time of hire:

1. Knowledge of evaluation methods and techniques to determine individual interests, aptitudes, skills and occupational preferences.
2. Knowledge of the principles and practices of assisting people in coping with physical and/or mental disabilities to meet their vocational, social and independent living needs.
3. Ability to gather information through questioning and observing individuals and by examining records and documents to assess consumer needs.
4. Ability to use a computer to conduct research, manage databases and produce written documents.
5. Ability to communicate information and ideas so others will understand; ability to appropriately document case activities and represent the agency in a professional manner.
6. Ability to interact effectively and establish rapport with diverse teams and groups of people.
7. Ability to maintain a calm manner and interact appropriately with others in emotionally charged or stressful situations.
8. Ability to analyze and determine the applicability of data, draw conclusions and make appropriate recommendations.
9. Ability to exercise discretion in handling confidential information.

## **2. QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II:**

**Distinguishing Characteristics:** This is the fully competent professional level classification in this series. Incumbents have thorough knowledge of policies, practices, and techniques and have

mastered the technical job content, perform work of greater complexity, exercise greater independence in making decisions and receive less supervision and review. At this level incumbents have sign off authority for individual caseloads and handle complex cases or transferred cases requiring exceptional mastery.

**Supervision Received:** Incumbents receive general supervision from employees of a higher grade who provide work assignments and facilitate performance reviews through formal and informal verbal and written reports for effectiveness and conformance to laws, rules, regulations and agency policies.

**Supervision Exercised:** Incumbents may provide functional direction to Qualified Vocational Counselor Level I or other employees of a lower grade through advice, guidance and assistance with tasks and participate in the training and mentoring of new employees and interns.

**Additional Functions Performed:** Incumbents perform the following: Consult with Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to ensure that the skills and abilities of the consumer are an effective employment match. Provide vocational rehabilitation counseling advice and to ensure provision of appropriate services to consumers deemed to present particularly difficult challenges, such as persons with multiple disabilities, persons who have been unsuccessful with other rehabilitation counselors and persons who have an extended history with the agency. Confer with agency staff, consumers' families, employers, professional specialists and others to exchange consumer information and determine the appropriateness of employment opportunities and resources for education, training and job placement assistance. Assist in maintaining a relationship with the local Career Centers for the purpose of providing consumers with information about employment opportunities, job seeking and methods of applying for current employment opportunities.

Based on assignment, incumbents may perform one or more of the following: Participate in the development of at least one statewide or regional training program. Design, implement and conduct group workshops. Represent local offices at regional and statewide placement meetings and participate in local/regional/statewide initiatives. Monitor and evaluate employer satisfaction post-placement through on-site visits and telephone calls. Lead and organize office quality improvement projects. Provide technical assistance or act as an office liaison regarding specific populations to ensure outreach and appropriate service delivery to specific and underserved groups. Provide training and education to employers regarding the skills, abilities and limitations of consumers. Consult with employers to determine job expectations and market these employment expectations to Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Level I and make specific recommendations to employers for hiring consumers.

**Additional Key Accountabilities:** Incumbents at this level have the decision-making authority to:

Determine content of training materials for group workshops. Independent management of and decision making ability to sign off on individual case loads.

**Relationships with Others:** Key contacts and relationships for incumbents include consumers and their families/legal guardians; supervisors and agency managers and staff; medical professionals; legal officials; vendors and contractors; and community members and/or organizations involved with consumers and/or their families/legal guardians.

**Working Environment:** While performing the duties of this classification, incumbents work both in an office setting and at employer sites. Incumbents may be exposed to moving mechanical parts, vibration causing tools or equipment, fumes, airborne particles or toxic or caustic chemicals, outside weather conditions and loud noises when visiting sites. Incumbents may also be exposed to verbal and/or physical confrontations. Incumbents are required to travel in the state and may be exposed to traffic and other road-way hazards.

**Physical Ability:** While performing the duties of this classification in an office setting, incumbents are regularly required to sit for long periods of time, communicate effectively and use information technology resources to process work assignments. Incumbents may be required to transport, move or install 25 pounds of office supplies or equipment (for example paper or case files) with or without

assistance and with or without the use of devices or equipment to assist with the effort. Work assignments may be performed with or without reasonable accommodation to a known disability.

**Knowledge, Education, and Experience:** Applicants must have at least (A) Master's degree or higher in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited university program, or a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor and (B) two (2) years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers, or (C) any equivalent combination of the required experience and the substitutions below.

Applicants working with deaf and hard of hearing consumers must be proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) and may be required to demonstrate ASL proficiency through assessment by agency staff.

Based on assignment, travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must have a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

**Substitutions:**

I. A Master's degree or higher in a related field such as Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Disability Studies, Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Work, Human Services, Education, Special Education, Occupational Therapy, Counseling (Mental Health, Education, Psychology), or Substance Abuse Therapy and one (1) year of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers may be substituted for the required (A) education. Relevant internship experience will be considered.

Incumbents must satisfy all the requirements of the Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I level plus the following at the time of hire:

1. Knowledge of the types and availability of public and private community-based organizations providing vocational rehabilitation services to consumers.
2. Knowledge of the characteristics and trends of the local labor market.
3. Knowledge of the principles and practices of vocational counseling.
4. Knowledge of agency rules, regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines governing assigned responsibilities.
5. Ability to act as a mentor and provide guidance to others.

### **3. QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II (MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALITY)**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) are seeking to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals who are shared consumers of DMH and MRC through the development of a robust vocational rehabilitation network of services, supports, counseling and guidance. The purpose of this program is for MRC to provide appropriate, individualized, vocational rehabilitation services and supports for DMH consumers enrolled in DMH's Adult Clinical Community Service (ACCS), with the ultimate goal of competitive, integrated employment.

MRC Mental Health Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) will work with job seekers to explore their interests, assess their needs, and determine the best pathway to ensure successful integrated competitive employment.

MRC will provide an array of comprehensive and coordinated employment supports, including procuring services from the provider community to assist job seekers with achieving their employment goals as part of an overall career pathway.

Employees in this position will lead and facilitate an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to meet the needs of an individual job seeker. The IRT model utilizes a combined team approach, maximizing wrap around services to support the job seeker with ongoing partnerships and communication. The work of VRCs is community-based. VRCs will meet with job seekers in a variety

of settings that could include, but are not limited to, community programs, DMH offices, MRC offices, and other community settings.

Duties and Responsibilities (these duties are a general summary and not all inclusive):

- Fosters an “informed choice” model of professional vocational counseling for individuals with persistent mental health/behavioral health conditions and/or co-occurring disorders who are receiving services from DMH.
- Incorporates ongoing engagement strategies within the VR system while providing on-going supports to facilitate completion of activities outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Determines eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.
- Administers functional capacity assessments, interest tests, aptitude tests, transferable skills analysis and other vocational assessments and shares information with job seeker and others as authorized by the job seeker.
- Reviews and analyzes diagnostic information through tests, records, interviews, and observations.
- Leads and facilitates the collaborated team to develop, implement, and monitor Individualized Plans for Employment in a manner that allows eligible job seekers the opportunity to exercise informed choice in employment outcomes.
- Recommends the purchase of services, equipment, and materials including Assistive Technology.
- Facilitates services and skills training in individual and group settings.
- Provides opportunities for job seekers to select service providers or MRC placement team to deliver job development, placement, and retention assistance.
- Partners with public and private organizations including, but not limited to, other agency staff, employers, community rehabilitation providers, state agencies, workforce partners, and schools to promote and market agency programs, collaborate, and coordinate in the delivery of consumer supports and services.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge of counseling and job placement of persons with vocational/occupational barriers, including physical, emotional, psychological and intellectual disabilities;
- Familiarity with utilizing psychological tests and other evaluative techniques;
- Commitment to lifelong learning in relationship to their own professional development;
- Outstanding organizational, written and oral communications skills; attention to detail;
- Capacity to gather, analyze, and evaluate significant case information pertinent to rehabilitation of an individual;
- Ability to serve as a mentor and provide guidance to others;
- Proficient usage of Microsoft Office products including Word, Excel and Outlook; prior use of client database systems.

MINIMUM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants must have at least (A) Master’s degree or higher in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation

Education (CORE) accredited university program, or a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the

Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor and (B) two

(2) years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers, or (C) any equivalent combination of the required experience and the substitutions below.

Applicants working with deaf and hard of hearing consumers must be proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) and may be required to demonstrate ASL proficiency through assessment by agency staff. Based on assignment, travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must have a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

Substitutions:

I. A Master's degree or higher in a related field such a Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Disability Studies,

Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Work, Human Services, Education,

Special Education, Occupational Therapy, Counseling (Mental Health, Education, Psychology), or Substance Abuse

Therapy and one (1) year of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers may be substituted for the required (A) education. Relevant internship experience will be considered.

#### 4. JOB PLACEMENT SPECIALIST:

The Job Placement Specialist (JPS) will consult with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to assess and evaluate the job readiness of consumers, analyze skills and abilities for correct employment matches. Make recommendations to proceed with job referral process. Identify accommodations and training needed that may be required within the workplace.

Interpret residual functional capacities assessments, interest tests and aptitude tests. Assess transferable skills, review and analyze diagnostic information through tests, records, interviews and observations. Develop, implement and monitor placement services included in Individualized Plans for Employment through onsite visits and conferences in a manner that allows the eligible consumer the opportunity to exercise Informed Choice in employment outcomes. Educate employers regarding skills, abilities and limitations of consumers. Consult with employers to determine job expectations and market these employment expectations to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Make specific recommendations to employers for hiring consumers. Confers with agency staff, clients' families, employers, professional specialist and others to exchange client information and determine appropriateness of employment opportunities and resources for education, training, job placement assistance and employment for clients. Conduct group workshops for clients in interviewing skills, resume writing, introduction and assistance with using the area office's resource room, etc., to prepare them for job opportunities. Professionally explain and answer inquiries relating to rules, regulations, policies and procedures to inform clients, their families and other interested parties about agency programs, objectives and services.

Monitors and evaluates client progress through individual meetings with client, on-site visits, review of reports, etc., provide vocational counseling to assist client adjustment to new situations and determine whether services, programs or placement are meeting client needs. JPS may assist in maintaining a liaison with the local Career Centers for the purpose of providing consumers with information about employment opportunities, job seeking, and methods of applying for jobs.

Schedule: travel 25% of the time.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) promotes equality, empowerment and independence of individuals with disabilities. These goals are achieved through enhancing and encouraging personal choice and the right to succeed or fail in the pursuit of independence and employment in the community. The MRC provides comprehensive services to people with disabilities that maximize their quality of life and economic self-sufficiency in the community.

Applicants must have at least (A) Master's degree or higher in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation

Education (CORE) accredited university program, or a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the

Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor and (B) two (2) years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers, or (C) any equivalent combination of the required experience and the substitutions below.

Applicants working with deaf and hard of hearing consumers must be proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) and may be required to demonstrate ASL proficiency through assessment by agency staff. Based on assignment, travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must have a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

#### Substitutions

I. A Master's degree or higher in a related field such a Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Disability Studies,

Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Work, Human Services, Education,

Special Education, Occupational Therapy, Counseling (Mental Health, Education, Psychology), or Substance Abuse

Therapy and one (1) year of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers may be substituted for the required (A) education. Relevant internship experience will be considered.

An Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer. Females, minorities, veterans, and persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

#### 5. QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR III:

**Distinguishing Characteristics:** This is the supervisory classification in this series and based on assignment may be a non-supervisory contract coordinator. Incumbents provide supervision and guidance on complex or specialized casework to Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Level I and II's within their work unit. At this level, incumbents may perform the duties for Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Levels I and II, but the primary focus is to provide formal and informal supervision and act as the liaison between Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and agency management.

**Supervision Received:** Incumbents receive general supervision from employees of a higher grade who provide guidance, statistical review of unit and performance reviews through both formal and informal reports for effectiveness and conformance to laws, regulations and agency policies.

**Supervision Exercised:** Incumbents may exercise direct supervision over, assign work to and review the performance of Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Level I and II or other employees of a lower grade.

Incumbents may provide functional direction to Qualified Vocational Counselor Level I and Level II or other employees of a lower grade through advice, guidance and delegation of tasks and participate in the training and mentoring of new employees.

Incumbents may participate in the interviewing process or may make recommendations for new hires.

**Additional Functions Performed:** Incumbents perform the following: Supervise and monitor unit activities such as consumer evaluations and case maintenance to ensure effective service delivery and compliance with agency policies and standards. Establish and maintain program and unit information systems. Prepare and monitor program and/or unit budget and allocation of funds. Develop and implement policies and procedures for assigned units and programs in accordance with agency regulations and applicable laws. Determine service delivery hours and caseloads to staff consistent with agency policies and consumer needs. Assist in the development and implementation of consumer needs assessment programs. Promote agency services to ensure appropriate referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation Division. Coordinate state and federal compliance review audits; gather sample studies, conduct in-house reviews of cases for compliance and provide requested materials, information and evaluations to ensure agency compliance with federal, state and agency policies, procedures and regulations regarding vocational rehabilitation. Coordinate Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) referrals; act as office liaison on all matters related to SSI/SSDI consumers receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration. Act as liaison regarding specific disabilities or special populations by attending meetings and providing information to counselors to ensure that the agency is reaching the specific populations, and to discuss current information on the target groups. Based on assignment, develop and negotiate contracts and grants with appropriate vendors; develop, negotiate and manage contract service budgets in order to assure program effectiveness and compliance with state and federal guidelines, policies and procedures.

**Additional Key Accountabilities:** Incumbents at this level have the decision-making authority to:

Evaluate job performance of subordinates, participate in the hiring and promotional process; notify management when corrective action may be appropriate; and provide support to enhance employee performance. Determine service delivery hours and caseloads to staff consistent with agency policies and consumer needs. Recommends contract and budget control actions by analyzing spending patterns and monthly and quarterly reports in order to maximize funds available for consumer services and to anticipate financial needs and assure appropriate transfer of funds. Review and sign off on case load for Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors I and QVRCs II as appropriate.

**Relationships with Others:** In addition to the contacts listed for Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Level I and II, key contacts and relationships for Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Level III incumbents include regional directors, peers and advocates.

**Working Environment:** While performing the duties of this classification, incumbents work both in an office setting and at employer sites. Incumbents may be exposed to moving mechanical parts, vibration causing tools or equipment, fumes, airborne particles or toxic or caustic chemicals, outside weather conditions and loud noises when visiting sites. Incumbents may also be exposed to verbal and/or physical confrontations. Incumbents are required to travel in the state and may be exposed to traffic and other road-way hazards.

**Physical Abilities:**

While performing the duties of this classification in an office setting, incumbents are regularly required to sit for long periods of time, communicate effectively and use information technology resources to process work assignments. Incumbents may be required to transport, move or install 25 pounds of office supplies or equipment (for example paper or case files) with or without assistance and with or without the use of devices or equipment to assist with the effort. Work assignments may be performed with or without reasonable accommodation to a known disability.

**Knowledge, Education, and Experience:** Applicants must have at least (A) Master's degree or higher in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited university

program, or a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor and (B) three (3) years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers, of which one (1) year must have been in a supervisory or leadership capacity or (C) any equivalent combination of the required experience and the substitutions below.

Based on assignment, travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must have a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

Applicants working with deaf and hard of hearing consumers must be proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) and may be required to demonstrate ASL proficiency through assessment by agency staff.

#### Substitutions:

I. A Master's degree or higher in a related field such a Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Disability Studies, Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Work, Human Services, Education, Special Education, Occupational Therapy, Counseling (Mental Health, Education, Psychology), or Substance Abuse Therapy and one (1) year of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in vocational counseling, job placement, career counseling and guidance, assessment and vocational evaluation, job development and services for employers may be substituted for the required (A) education. Relevant internship experience will be considered.

Incumbents are required to have all the requirements of the Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I & II level plus the following at the time of hire:

1. Thorough knowledge of the types and availability of public and private community-based organizations providing vocational rehabilitation services to consumers. 2. Thorough knowledge of the characteristics and trends of the local labor market. 3. Knowledge of the principles, practices and techniques of program budgeting. 4. Ability to supervise, including planning and assigning work according to the nature of the job to be accomplished, the capabilities of subordinates and available resources; controlling work through periodic reviews and/or evaluations; monitor and encourage subordinates to work effectively and efficiently; and determine the need for and wither recommend or initiate corrective action. 5. Ability to lead others and organize the efforts of others in accomplishing work objectives and performance standards. 6. Ability to communicate and work effectively with senior leaders

#### 6. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE SPECIALIST:

The Employment Service Specialist markets and promotes the services of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) to employers and other interested parties in the office's district; develops and implements promotional programs; gathers and disseminates labor market information; provides technical assistance concerning recruitment of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Consumers; establishes and maintains working relationships with employers; plans and organizes job fairs and recruitment; establishes and maintains a data bank of information on local employers; assists Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's staff by soliciting employment opportunities for specific consumers with disabilities and performs related duties as required.

#### Qualifications:

Applicants must have (A) at least three (3) years of full-time or equivalent part-time professional experience in: business management, business administration, public relations, marketing, personnel interviewing, recruitment or job placement; employment, vocational, educational, psychological, sociological or rehabilitation counseling or guidance; job analysis or position classification work or any equivalent combination of the required experience and the substitutions below.

Extensive travel is required; incumbents who elect to use a motor vehicle for travel must possess a current and valid motor vehicle driver's license at a class level specific to assignment.

Substitutions:

I. A Bachelor's degree or higher in marketing, business management, business administration, public relations or public administration may be substituted for two (2) years of the required experience.

**B. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.**

All MRC vocational rehabilitation counselors are expected to meet at least the education and experience requirements of a Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Promotional opportunities in the series would require more experience and/or a higher educational level.

#### IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION:

MRC's Training Department supports a wide variety of training and development programs for all staff through a comprehensive training program. MRC's training program have been focused on supporting implementation of WIOA regulations and guidelines, and on working with our workforce partners and other disability agencies to provide coordinated services. MRC will continue to provide training to its staff to enhance their skills, professional development, and enhanced practices to best serve consumer needs.

A series of workshops and seminars have been and will continue to be planned in the following priority areas:

Continued implementation of WIOA, Vocational Rehabilitation best practices, trainings related to the agency's new initiatives with the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Transitional Assistance, trainings on MRC's revamped CIES employment services procurement and its linkage to the new MRC-DMH Employment initiative, substance abuse training in partnership with the Department of Public Health, Pre-Employment Transition Services, quality employment outcomes, leadership development and succession training, transportation options, transitional planning, serving consumers on the autism spectrum, computer skills in Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Access), and programs under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (operated by MRC).

MRC has also worked with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) on a series of staff development efforts related to Pre-ETS and transition services, Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach, career pathways, and trainings on the Common Performance Measures and understanding and using data. MRC is also working on trainings for staff and consumers in partnership with Work Without Limits, a program run by the University of Massachusetts, and is also coordinating training with MRC employer partners and MRC providers.

MRC also continues to offer ongoing professional development for VR counselors, managers, supervisors, as well as aspiring supervisors. These trainings address 21st century labor trends, high growth occupations and skills that are in demand, trainings on job accommodations and employment tax credits, amongst other topics. MRC is also conducting Change Management Training to support its staff with changes related to WIOA and focusing on improving practices to better serve the needs of MRC consumers and to improve consumer satisfaction. MRC also makes trainings available in cooperation with staff labor unions on professional development, including computer software training and online training via LinkedIn's Learning Online training site.

MRC has also worked with the state HR Division's Center for Staff Development to develop a certificate program for aspiring managers and supervisors where staff works to gain leadership and management skills guided by a supervisor or manager serving as a mentor. Also, project management and leadership certificates are available through this program. Finally, MRC has

developed and has operated a regular new staff orientation to assist with educating and retaining staff.

Through its training department, MRC acquires and routinely disseminates rehabilitation materials and research to staff such as the latest publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation on Issues, training materials from the Research and Training Centers, training guides and resource materials produced by recipients of RSA grants, and products from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, as well as information and knowledge from RSA VR Technical Assistance centers such as the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC), the Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC), and the Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQATAC). MRC also disseminates materials and information from the National Rehabilitation Association, the Association of People Supporting Employment First, Explore VR, and other sources. These information and materials are also discussed and utilized in training and staff development meetings and webinars. MRC has also coordinated and consulted with WINTAC and NTACT on training efforts.

## 4. Staff Development

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

**A. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and**

MRC has a system of staff development operated through its training Department. MRC's staff development system supports a wide variety of training and development programs for all staff through a comprehensive training program. MRC's training program has been focused on supporting the implementation of WIOA regulations and guidelines and on working with our workforce partners and other disability agencies to provide coordinated services. MRC will continue to provide training to its staff to enhance their skills, professional development, and enhanced practices to best serve consumer needs.

A series of workshops and seminars have been and will continue to be planned in the following priority areas:

Continued implementation of WIOA, Vocational Rehabilitation best practices, trainings related to the agency's new initiatives with the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Transitional Assistance, trainings on MRC's revamped CIES employment services procurement and its linkage to the new MRC-DMH Employment initiative, substance abuse training in partnership with the Department of Public Health, Pre-Employment Transition Services, quality employment outcomes, leadership development and succession training, transportation options, transitional planning, serving consumers on the autism spectrum. computer skills in Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Access), and programs under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (operated by MRC).

MRC has also worked with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) on a series of staff development efforts related to Pre-ETS and transition services, Integrated Resource

Team (IRT) approach, career pathways, and trainings on the Common Performance Measures and understanding and using data. MRC is also working on trainings for staff and consumers in partnership with Work Without Limits, a program run by the University of Massachusetts, and is also coordinating training with MRC employer partners and MRC providers.

MRC also continues to offer ongoing professional development for VR counselors, managers, supervisors, as well as aspiring supervisors. These trainings are ongoing and address 21st century labor trends, high growth occupations and skills that are in demand, trainings on job accommodations and employment tax credits, amongst other topics. MRC is also conducting Change Management Training to support its staff with changes related to WIOA and focusing on improving practices to better serve the needs of MRC consumers and to improve consumer satisfaction. MRC also makes trainings available in cooperation with staff labor unions on professional development, including computer software training and online training via LinkedIn's Learning Online training site.

MRC has also worked with the state HR Division's Center for Staff Development to develop a certificate program for aspiring managers and supervisors where staff works to gain leadership and management skills guided by a supervisor or manager serving as a mentor. There also are project management and leadership certificates available through this program. Finally, MRC has developed and has operated a regular new staff orientation to assist with educating and retaining staff.

Through its training department, MRC acquires and routinely disseminates rehabilitation materials and research to staff such as the latest publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation on Issues, training materials from the Research and Training Centers, training guides and resource materials produced by recipients of RSA grants, and products from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, as well as information and knowledge from RSA VR Technical Assistance centers such as the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), the Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC), the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC), and the Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQATAC). MRC also disseminates materials and information from the National Rehabilitation Association, the Association of People Supporting Employment First, Explore VR, and other sources. These information and materials are also discussed and utilized in training and staff development meetings and webinars. MRC has also coordinated and consulted with WINTAC and NTACT on training efforts.

## **B. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.**

MRC has the following procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

The Commission acquires and routinely disseminates rehabilitation materials and research to staff such as the latest publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation on Issues, training materials from the Research and Training Centers, training guides and resource materials produced by recipients of RSA grants, and products from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, as well as information and knowledge from RSA VR Technical Assistance centers such as the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC), and the Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQATAC). MRC also disseminates materials and information from the National Rehabilitation Association, the Association of People Supporting Employment First, Explore VR, and other sources. These information and materials are also discussed and utilized in training and staff development meetings and webinars. MRC has also coordinated and consulted with WINTAC and NTACT on training efforts.

## 5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

MRC has dedicated VR counselors skilled in American Sign Language (ASL) and are qualified to work with consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition, MRC has counselors fluent in the following languages throughout the state: Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Khmer, French/Haitian Creole, Hindi and Tamil. Some area directors, head clerks and other clerical staff are fluent in American Sign Language, Spanish, Khmer, Cantonese, Mandarin, Haitian Creole, or Portuguese. Eleven full and part-time sign language interpreters are also on staff. MRC also works with its contracted service providers for CIES and Pre-ETS to provide communication coordination for consumers referred by MRC to these contracts. MRC has a bilingual committee of staff which provide support in this area. MRC also works with Cross Cultural Community Services (CCCS) (<https://embracingculture.com/>) and other vendors on the statewide contract to facilitate communication needs for individuals served by MRC who speak languages other than English.

MRC also has a contract for foreign language translation and MRC has translated key agency documents and VR communication letters working closely with the Bilingual Committee. The Commission also maintains a statewide contract with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to secure additional ASL interpreters, CART reporters, and video relay translation as needed. Staff with specific language skills and interpreters are geographically placed to coincide with population and other demographics relating to target consumer groups. This strategy will continue to be applied and staff with specialized skills added, as appropriate, for the upcoming year and beyond. MRC continues to work on ways to work with staff to further improve coordination of communication needs for individuals served by MRC.

## 6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The information in the State plan pertaining to the RSA requirements for a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development is coordinated and shared with the appropriate State Department of Education unit consistent with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act to assure compliance and coordination of efforts across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### j. Statewide Assessment

1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

A. With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

The most recent MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) report can be found on MRC's website: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/10/10/FY2018-MRC-Comprehensive-Statewide-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

## **The appendix can be found at:**

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2018-comprehensive-statewide-vocational-rehabilitation-consumer-needs-assessment-appendix/download>

1. The FY2018 CSNA confirms that the majority of consumers served by the MRC are people with the most significant disabilities. The findings indicate that a majority of MRC consumers require multiple Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and supports to assist them in their efforts to prepare for, choose, obtain, maintain, and advance in competitive employment. There is also a high need for transportation and Community Living (CL) services amongst many consumers. The need for multiple VR services was found to be slightly greater amongst individuals of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (particularly African-Americans and Hispanics) and for individuals with cognitive or psychological disabilities. This finding was consistent with the 2016 report but more pronounced than past years. The findings suggest that many consumers also require supported employment and ongoing and extended employment supports. The need for multiple CL services was greatest among individuals with physical or sensory disabilities.
2. Overall, the majority of MRC consumers believe MRC services are addressing all or most of their needs and are satisfied with MRC services. 80% of consumers feel MRC services are at least somewhat effective in meeting their vocational service needs. 88% of MRC consumers are satisfied with the services they receive. Also, the majority of consumers (79%) are also somewhat or very satisfied with the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment. The satisfaction rate increased from 2016 while the proportion of those who felt services are meeting their needs and satisfaction with IPE development decreased slightly from the prior year. Many of those who feel MRC services are not meeting their needs indicate they have difficulty maintaining contact with their counselor, have experienced changes in their assigned counselors due to high levels of staff turnover, feel they have not been provided consistent or adequate information on services, or are struggling with health issues, financial issues, and other difficulties.
3. Many consumers expressed strong praise and gratitude for the hard work and support provided by the MRC and its counseling staff. It is very evident that MRC and its staff make a significant positive impact on the lives of many of its consumers. The level of positive feedback from consumers this year is once again exceptionally notable. A need raised by consumers included better contact with their counselor and more information about available services and MRC procedures, including information and referral to other agencies. It also appears some consumers may not have a complete understanding of what the MRC can and cannot do for them. Many consumers also appear to be struggling with the high cost of living in Massachusetts and the competitive nature of the job market.
4. The most important and needed VR services listed by consumers were job placement (88%), career counseling (86%), supported employment (84%), benefits planning (82%), work-readiness training (73%), ongoing supports to assist in retaining employment (73%), assistance with college education (71%), and On-the-Job Training and Job-Driven Trainings (70%), and vocational training
5. The most important job characteristics that MRC consumers indicated they are looking for in a job include a friendly job environment (96%), job satisfaction and personal interests (95%), earning a living wage (95%), an adequate number of hours worked per week (94%), vacation and other leave benefits (90%), promotional opportunities (88%), and health insurance benefits (84%).

6. The most common occupational areas of interest listed by MRC consumers included Community/Social/Human Services (34%), Health Care (29%), Administrative (29%), Self-Employment (26%), Customer Service (25%), Arts/Entertainment (24%), Computers/Information Technology (21%), and Education/Childcare (17%). All but Self-Employment are amongst the top 10 occupational goals by Standard Occupational Code (SOC) in consumer employment plans in the MRCIS Case Management System. A number of consumers also asked for additional information on self-employment supports.
7. Only 27% of consumers indicated that they are aware of the Independent Living Center in their area. Individuals with psychological disabilities, younger consumers, and those in the South and North District tended to be less aware of ILCs compared to consumers with other types of disabilities.
8. Transportation continues to be an area of need for some MRC consumers. The most important and needed transportation services and options listed by consumers are the Donated Vehicle Program (18%), driver's education and training (15%), public transportation (14%), Taxi/Uber/Lyft (11%), information on transportation options (10%), the Transportation Access Pass (9%), The Ride/paratransit (9%), and car pool/ride sharing (6%).
9. Transportation can serve as a barrier to some consumers and 35% of consumers find transportation to be a potential barrier to obtaining employment (up 2% from 2016 but steady on a 4-year trend line). Common reasons for how transportation is a barrier include the distance to and location of available jobs, inability to access jobs in areas without transportation, the cost of transportation, that consumers must rely on others for transportation, lack of a vehicle and/or driver's license, health conditions or the nature of disability, and the reliability and the time required to travel via public transit/paratransit.
10. The most important and needed Community Living services indicated by responding consumers were affordable, accessible housing and the Mass Access Housing Registry (64%), Social/Recreational opportunities (53%), Medicaid waiver services (43%), Assistive Technology (36%), Home Care Services (35%), Adult Supported Living (33%), and Home Modification (31%).
11. When factoring out consumers who indicated they do not require Community Living services, 89% of MRC consumers indicated that MRC's services were somewhat or extremely useful in assisting them to maintain independence in the community. As with the section on VR, many consumers reflected on how the MRC's assistance has been tremendously valuable. Many consumers, however, were not aware of some or all of the CL services provided by the MRC. Others indicated they do not require CL services. There appears to be a higher need for CL services amongst women and minority consumers.
12. Finding affordable and accessible housing continues to remain a challenge for many consumers due to the high cost of living in Massachusetts. The Independent Living Centers may be able to assist consumers in this area, and counselors may be able to refer consumers to other resources to assist with housing needs.
13. A total of 17% of consumers feel they require additional services and supports. This number decreased about 2% from 2016. These services include job search assistance, job placement and job training, financial assistance, transportation, affordable and accessible housing, counseling and guidance, information on available services, assistive technology, education and training, services from IL centers, and services and supports from other agencies, and computer/technology skills training.
14. The most important single service consumers are receiving includes job placement and job search services, assistance with college education and job training, tuition waivers, vocational counseling and guidance, assistive technology, job readiness training, assistance with obtaining supplies for school and work, ongoing employment supports, job trainings, and transportation,

15. A majority of MRC counselors and supervisors (78% Satisfied/Very Satisfied) are satisfied with their ability to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive employment based on their skills, interests, needs, and choices. This satisfaction rate is down slightly from 2016%. The majority of MRC counselors are generally satisfied with most services provided to consumers, including internal job placement services, services from Community Rehabilitation Providers, and education and training provided to consumers by schools and colleges. One area of improvement identified by counselors was the need to improve communication with both consumers and providers. Counselors identified areas that would assist them in doing their job better, such as improved support and resources for job placement, more full time job placement specialists, increased information on job leads for consumers, additional on-the-job training and other training resources, continued enhancements to the MRCIS system, more resources for vocational assessment and vocational training for consumers, and training on policies, procedures, and Pre-Employment Transition Services, amongst others.
16. Most consumers appear to be satisfied with services received from Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). The majority of MRC staff also are somewhat or very satisfied with CRP services. 92% of CRPs indicated they are satisfied with services they provide to MRC consumers. Improved communication as well as information flow between CRPs and MRC staff may assist in improving service delivery to consumers and lead to more successful employment outcomes. Some CRPs have asked for MRC to provide additional information on client referrals for CRP services. Recent vendor expansion undertaken appears to have addressed CRP capacity needs, but there still may be a need for additional capacity in specific geographic areas, client population focus areas, and particularly service areas such as assessment based on counselor and provider feedback. MRC is also using CRPs to roll out new procurements to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities. Feedback on these services from vendors will be incorporated in the FY2019 CSNA.
17. A survey of MRC employer partners through MRC's account management system and those employers participating in the MRC Annual Hiring Event indicate a very high level of satisfaction with MRC job placement services amongst employer partners (88% Satisfied/Very Satisfied) including satisfaction with the job performance of employees hired through MRC (93% satisfied/very satisfied). Most responding employers indicated that MRC meets their recruitment needs and would recommend MRC to other businesses for employment and recruitment. These findings suggest that MRC's efforts to work with employers are effective towards accommodating the needs of our consumers and employer partners. It is recommended MRC expand these surveys to other employers.
18. There are areas where additional MRC staff training may assist in improving the quality and effectiveness of VR services delivered to consumers. Specific areas include trainings on the MRCIS system, as well as on VR best practices, policies, and procedures, strategies for maintaining communication with consumers and time management, internal controls, WIOA Common Measures and requirements, trainings on Autism, and on Pre-Employment Transition Services and transition services under WIOA.
19. The MRC has again identified Asian and Pacific Islanders as being slightly underserved by the MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation program compared to their proportion in the overall state population. MRC continues to see growth in minority populations served by the MRC VR program in general. Growth in the Asian population continues to be seen in the state's general population while it has remained steady amongst the MRC population. It is recommended that the MRC continue its outreach efforts to Asian communities, however it did grow during FY2018. MRC has translated key agency marketing and information materials and recently completed a project to translate all MRCIS correspondence letters into several Asian languages common in Massachusetts including Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, and Khmer as part of its Language Access Plan. MRC will be conducting focus groups in two of its offices with higher concentrations of Asian consumers to gather further

information on how MRC can better address the needs of this underserved population. Also, MRC will consult its Bilingual Committee as part of these efforts and develop appropriate training programs for staff.

## **B. Who are minorities;**

The CSNA report indicates the need for multiple VR services was found to be slightly greater amongst individuals of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. For example, minority consumers were more likely to find obtaining a high school diploma, transition from school to work, on-the-job training, job-driven training, work-readiness/soft skills training, and vocational training as important service needs. This finding was more pronounced than prior years. The need for college education supports and transportation services were also higher amongst consumers of minority background compared to white consumers.

Over the past ten years, MRC has seen an increase in consumers from minority backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic consumers. There also has been a slight growth in the proportion of Native American consumers, reaching a 10 year high of 1.2% in FY2018. Numerically, the largest growth is in Hispanic and African-American consumers. Hispanic consumers reached a 10-year high in FY2018. Proportionally, the largest growth in MRC's consumer population over the past decade has been among Asian and Hispanic consumers, which is consistent with the 2010 Census figures for Massachusetts.

Hispanic consumers have been growing the fastest over the past 5 years (+2.7%), while African-Americans served has grown by 1.3% over the same period. African-Americans are served by the MRC at a much higher rate than their rate in the overall population and Hispanic consumers are served by MRC at a rate slightly above their rate in the general population. Since FY2013, MRC has seen a flat pattern in Asian consumers served (remaining between 3.4% and 3.8%) after seeing a major increase in Asians served between FY2006 and FY2012. It continues to appear that Asians are slightly underserved in comparison with their rate in the overall state population (3.7% of MRC consumers compared to 6.1% for all MA population)

As growth in the Asian community continues to be seen in the state's general population, it is recommended that MRC continues its outreach efforts to Asian communities. There was growth in the number of Asian consumers served by MRC during FY2018 but it still remains below the proportion in the overall state population.

## **C. Who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;**

The MRC has again identified Asian and Pacific Islanders as being slightly underserved by the MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation program compared to their proportion in the overall state population. MRC continues to see growth in minority populations served by the MRC VR program in general. Growth in the Asian population continues to be seen in the state's general population while it has remained steady amongst the MRC population. It is recommended that the MRC continue its outreach efforts to Asian communities, however it did grow during FY2018. MRC has translated key agency marketing and information materials and recently completed a project to translate all MRCIS correspondence letters into several Asian languages common in Massachusetts including Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, and Khmer as part of its Language Access Plan. MRC will be conducting focus groups in two of its offices with higher concentrations of Asian consumers to gather further information on how MRC can better address the needs of this underserved population. Also, MRC will consult its Bilingual Committee as part of these efforts and will develop appropriate training programs for staff.

## **D. Who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and**

In order to meet the needs of individuals served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System, MRC continues its efforts to collaborate with other core partners in the workforce investment system to reduce unemployment of individuals with disabilities and to provide effective services to employers throughout the state, to seek out collaborative opportunities including possible projects and grants that may assist individuals with disabilities across Massachusetts in obtaining competitive employment. MRC continues its efforts to work closely together on WIOA implementation including common performance measures, and is working with its partners to use Workforce Connect as a consumer-facing and staff-facing dashboard and case management overlay to track shared consumers across the workforce system, among others. MRC participates in numerous workgroups such as the WIOA Steering Committee, WIOA Systems Integration Workgroup, and other committees who are working on the alignment of services under the workforce system.

MRC is increasing its collaboration with other core partners under WIOA to survey and further identify the needs of individuals working with other components of the Workforce system. Some of the identified needs include: interviewing skills, resume development, job specific skills (CVS Pharmacy Technician training, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Program, Advance Auto Parts, Lowes, Home Depot retail training, customer service jobs skills training, food service training, and human service training). MRC will continue to consult with core partners on the identified needs of their consumers as it relates to accessibility and access to employment opportunities, employment training, and provide employer trainings on disability awareness and job accommodations. MRC is reaching out to its core partners as part of its next needs assessment to gather additional data on the needs of individuals in the overall workforce system to complement and further enhance the CSNA process going forward. MRC will be reaching out to its core partners to gather additional data on the needs of individuals in the overall workforce system to complement and enhance the CSNA.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission VR Program has a growing presence at the Massachusetts Career Centers; the MRC Commissioner serves on the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), and each MRC Area Director has a formal relationship with at least one Career Center. In addition, Area Directors or other MRC staff are on local workforce investment boards. MRC VR counseling staff make frequent visits and often conduct interviews at the local career centers and has leased space at all Career Centers to further increase MRC's presence. MRC has finalized its MOUs and infrastructure funding agreements with local areas and the Career Centers. Finally, the MRC's job placement specialists and other assigned MRC staff work closely with local Career Centers to provide high quality vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities seeking expanded employment opportunities and MRC is providing assistance to Career Centers so they can best meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

## **E. Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.**

Among individuals with less than a high school education at application, according to the most recent CNSA, 92% indicate that transition services to assist in transitioning from high school to college and employment are important and 93% find Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities as important service needs. Obtaining a high school diploma and college education were also rated as important services by youth.

The most important and needed Pre-Employment Transition Services listed by MRC consumers of transition age (14 through 21- up to their 22nd birthday) included internships/work-based learning experiences (92%), followed by learning about education/jobs/careers (job exploration counseling) (88.7%), transitioning from high school to college/work (86.7%), assistance with college education (85.2%), work-readiness training (85.1%), and college/career counseling (81.5%) and mentorship/peer counseling/self-advocacy (81%). 74% of consumers of transition age indicate they have received some Pre-Employment Transition Services from MRC. Some consumers report they receive Pre-Employment Transition Services from schools outside of MRC, the frequency of the

responses range from 17% for advocacy/peer counseling to 49% for work-based learning experiences.

The majority of transition age consumers indicate they are satisfied with Pre-Employment Transition Services provided by MRC and their partners in meeting their needs towards future education and employment (71% Satisfied/Very Satisfied, and 20% Somewhat Satisfied), and the majority who are receiving these services (72%) indicate these services are effective in preparing them for their future career.

Overall, results throughout the CSNA demonstrate a significant need for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) among high school students with disabilities and youth consumers of transition age and MRC is working to address this need through its various transition and Pre-ETS initiatives. MRC continues to develop strategies to work more closely with local school districts on transition and Pre-ETS services, including coordinating services with those provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). MRC has a counselor assigned to every public high school in the Commonwealth, has developed strong working relationships with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and has a Transition Manager to oversee transition and coordination with educational authorities.

MRC is also operating a 5-year demonstration grant, Transition Pathway Services, funded by RSA. It will assist with needs in this area, such as work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities. This grant continues to ramp up and will be used to develop additional best practices in this area. MRC has expanded its service offerings to students who are potentially eligible for VR services in addition to those who are VR eligible in collaboration with vendors and school districts and to expand work-based learning to include job tours, job shadowing, volunteering, and other work-based learning areas based on RSA and WINTAC guidance.

## 2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and

In terms of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State. Most consumers appear to be satisfied with services received from Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). The majority of MRC staff also indicate that they are generally satisfied with CRP services. The operation of CRP programs through the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) procurements appear to address many but not all consumer needs. There also appears to be some areas where additional CRP capacity may potentially be needed to cover certain geographic areas or specific populations, and this should be examined closer by MRC. The addition of Pre-ETS services to potentially eligible students as part of MRC's procurements to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the new RFR for the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) RFR in FY2020 is also an opportunity in this area. Finally, improved communication and information flow between CRPs and MRC staff, more information on consumer referrals, and continued efforts to streamline paperwork processing may assist in improving service delivery to consumers and lead to more successful employment outcomes.

## 3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The most recent CSNA confirms that transition career services and Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth and high school students with disabilities are important and needed services across the Commonwealth. Results throughout the CSNA demonstrate a high need for these services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services among high school students with disabilities and youth consumers of transition age and MRC is working to address this need in coordination with schools across the state.

Among individuals with less than a high school education at application, according to the most recent CSNA. 92% indicate that transition services to assist in transitioning from high school to college and employment are important and 93% find Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities as important service needs. Obtaining a high school diploma and college education were also rated as important services by youth.

The most important and needed Pre-Employment Transition Services listed by MRC consumers of transition age (14 through 21- up to their 22nd birthday) included internships/work-based learning experiences (92%), followed by learning about education/jobs/careers (job exploration counseling) (88.7%), transitioning from high school to college/work (86.7%), assistance with college education (85.2%), work-readiness training (85.1%), and college/career counseling (81.5%) and mentorship/peer counseling/self-advocacy (81%). 74% of consumers of transition age indicate they have received some Pre-Employment Transition Services from MRC. Some consumers report they receive Pre-Employment Transition Services from schools outside of MRC, the frequency of the responses range from 17% for advocacy/peer counseling to 49% for work-based learning experiences.

MRC continues to develop strategies to work more closely with local school districts on transition and Pre-ETS services, including coordinating services with those provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). MRC has a counselor assigned to every public high school in the Commonwealth, has developed strong working relationships with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and has a Transition Manager to oversee transition and coordination with educational authorities. MRC is also in the fourth year of a 5-year demonstration grant, Transition Pathway Services, funded by RSA. It will assist with needs in this area, such as work-based learning experiences. This grant continues to ramp up and will be used to develop additional best practices in this area. MRC is also working on expanding its service offerings to students who are potentially eligible for VR services in addition to those who are VR eligible in collaboration with vendors and school districts and to expand work-based learning to include job tours, job shadowing, volunteering, and other work-based learning areas based on RSA and WINTAC guidance.

To assist in determining the statewide need for Pre-Employment Transition Services, MRC analyzed statewide data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/selectedpopulations.aspx>). According to DESE data, there are 173,843 students with disabilities (consisting of 18.1% of all high school students statewide) enrolled in public high schools in Massachusetts as of October 1, 2018, all who may be potentially eligible for VR services and/or who may benefit from Pre-ETS services. Based on this data and the high need for Pre-ETS services demonstrated throughout the CSNA as described above, MRC forecasts that for FY2020 that its entire 15% reservation of VR funding set aside to provide Pre-ETS services as required under WIOA is necessary (approximately \$6.3 million) to provide the five required Pre-ETS services to students with disabilities (work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education and other comprehensive training programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy). MRC forecasts that due to the fact that the entire set-aside is required, that no funding will remain to provide authorized Pre-Employment Transition Services beyond the five required services due to the high need for Pre-ETS services as demonstrated in this year's CSNA findings and the DESE data.

## k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

# 1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services

The 2018 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey determined that the population of Massachusetts was 6,902,149.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 2017 reported the following demographic profile for the residents of the state:

80.8% were White; 8.9% were Black or African American; 12.3% were Hispanic (any race); 7.1% were Asian; 2.5% were multi-racial; 0.5% were American Indian and Alaska Native; 0.1% were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

Based on an analysis of data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/selectedpopulations.aspx>), there are 173,843 students with disabilities (consisting of 18.1% of all high school students statewide) enrolled in public high schools in Massachusetts as of October 1, 2018.

In 2017, there were 6,785,622 individuals living in the community in Massachusetts, of which 803,977 were persons with disabilities; a prevalence rate of 11.8%. Of these, 396,597 individuals with disabilities are aged 18 to 64 and living in the community. This is a projection based on available data from the 2018 Disability Statistics Compendium. Thus, our projection is that 396,597 individuals who may be eligible for MRC VR services.

[https://disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/2018 Compendium Accessible AdobeReaderFriendly.pdf](https://disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/2018%20Compendium%20Accessible%20AdobeReaderFriendly.pdf)

Please note that this is the most up to date information available as of when the State Plan was developed.

## 2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

### A. The VR Program;

**FFY2021 Annual Estimates: It is estimated that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission will provide services with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Act as follows during FFY2021:**

1. New individuals to be provided services to determine eligibility (new applicants): Projection 8,900
2. New individuals to be provided services to determine order of selection priority assignment and vocational rehabilitation needs (new individuals determined eligible): Projection 8,100
3. New Individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments (New IPEs): Projection: 5,900
4. New Individuals with most significant disabilities to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments (New IPEs, Most Significantly Disabled): Projection: 2,800
5. Total Eligible Individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services (new and existing): Projection: 24,500

**FFY2022 Annual Estimates: It is estimated that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission will provide services with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Act as follows during FFY2022:**

1. New individuals to be provided services to determine eligibility (new applicants): Projection 8,900
2. New individuals to be provided services to determine order of selection priority assignment and vocational rehabilitation needs (new individuals determined eligible): Projection 8,100
3. New Individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments (New IPEs): Projection: 5,900
4. New Individuals with most significant disabilities to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments (New IPEs, Most Significantly Disabled): Projection: 2,900
5. Total Eligible Individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services (new and existing): Projection: 25,000

## **B. The Supported Employment Program; and**

MRC will be utilizing Title I and Title VI B funds to provide Supported Employment services. It is estimated that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission will provide Supported Employment services with Title I and Title VI funds to 450 individuals annually in both FFY2021 and FFY2022.

## **C. Each priority category, if under an order of selection.**

During FFY2021/PY2020, MRC estimates we will serve 21,485 consumers, excluding potentially eligible students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services. MRC is not operating under an order of selection and all categories are open for services as of this time.

## **3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure but is not operating under an Order of Selection at the current time. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

## **4. The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.**

### **FFY2020 Estimates:**

Based upon current forecasting, it is estimated that the costs of services with VR funds will be approximately \$68.1 million dollars in FFY2020.

MRC estimates it will serve 24,500 eligible individuals in the VR program in FFY2020. MRC has an order of selection policy and procedure, but is not operating under an OOS and all categories are

open at this time. Estimates of cost per category (all consumers are being served) are broken down as follows:

Disability Priority Category 1 (Most Significantly Disabled): 10,780 consumers, total cost of service, \$28,400,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,634.

Disability Priority Category 2 (Significantly Disabled): 11,270 consumers, total cost of service, \$28,400,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,520.

Disability Priority Category 3 (Disabled): 2,450 consumers, total cost of service, \$5,000,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,041.

Potentially Eligible Consumers receiving Pre-ETS: 3,000 students, cost of service \$6,300,000, average cost per student: \$2,100.

#### **FFY2021 Estimates:**

Based upon current forecasting, it is estimated that the costs of services with VR funds will be approximately \$68.1 million dollars in FFY2021. MRC has an order of selection policy and procedure, but is not operating under an OOS and all categories are open at this time. Estimates of cost per category (all consumers are being served) are broken down as follows:

MRC estimates it will serve 25,000 eligible individuals in the VR program in FFY2021, broken down as follows:

Disability Priority Category 1 (Most Significantly Disabled): 11,000 consumers, total cost of service \$28,400,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,582.

Disability Priority Category 2 (Significantly Disabled): 11,500 consumers, total cost of service, \$28,400,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,470.

Disability Priority Category 3 (Disabled): 2,500 consumers, total cost of service, \$5,000,000, average cost per individual in category: \$2,000

Potentially Eligible Consumers receiving Pre-ETS: 3,000 students, cost of service \$6,300,000, average cost per student: \$2,100.

## **I. State Goals and Priorities**

The designated State unit must:

### **1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has developed the following goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs in collaboration with the SRC. These have been identified based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted in collaboration with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) during fiscal year 2019 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. They are also based on recommendations and input from the SRC, and input from MRC Senior Management. Additionally, these goals include the new WIOA Common Performance Measures. MRC will review progress towards these goals on at least a quarterly basis with senior management and the SRC. The SRC was involved with the development of the goals and has agreed to these goals.

## 2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs

MRC has based its goals and priorities on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted in collaboration with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) during fiscal year 2019 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. They are based on recommendations and input from the SRC, and input from MRC Senior Management. Additionally, these goals include the new WIOA Common Performance Measures. The SRC was involved in the development of these goals as well.

The MRC has formulated agency specific goals following recommendations in conjunction with recommendations from the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. These goals were formulated with the five WIOA Combined State Plan goals in mind; each of the 21 MRC goals below have been identified and categorized as falling within at least one of the five statewide goals. Targets will be reviewed on an annual basis during the 4-year state plan and will be included in the two-year plan update.

Overall Massachusetts WIOA Combined State Plan Goals:

1. Support business growth and sustainability elevating workforce services and developing diverse talent pipelines for businesses.
2. Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.
3. Improve career mobility and unsubsidized employment outcomes for youth.
4. Ensure Massachusetts has a world-class service delivery system by integrating use of modern tools and techniques.

### **MRC Goal 1:**

Create career pathways for job seekers through increasing Employment Outcomes through placement, training, and Job Driven Trainings provided through MRC's Job Placement Unit, Employer Account Management System, and Annual Statewide Hiring Event. Continue to coordinate these business engagement efforts with WIOA partners as part of the overall MassHire Massachusetts workforce system.

This aligns with Goal II of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

Continue measuring Key Performance Indicators related to Successful Employment Outcomes (SEO's) including:

- Total number and percent of Successful Employment Outcomes for Vocational Rehabilitation Division and percentage change over the prior year's results
- Total number and percent of Successful Employment Outcomes achieved through the involvement of the MRC in the current fiscal year and percentage change over the prior year's results
- Total number and percent of Successful Employment Outcomes (Status 26 closures) with Employers participating in MRC's Account Management System in the current fiscal year and percentage change over the prior year's results
- Total number and percent of Successful Employment Outcomes (Status 26 Closures) from consumers participating in MRC's annual Statewide Hiring Event in the current fiscal year and percentage change over the prior year's results

- Continue to coordinate business engagement efforts as part of the MassHire workforce system through quarterly meetings of the Business Services and Engagement Workgroup

Target:

MRC's target goals:

- 3,700 Successful Employment Outcomes for MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation Division and 3% a positive percentage change over prior year results, with 15% of all VR eligible consumers served achieving a successful employment outcome.
- Exceed 400 Successful Employment Outcomes, or 11% of all SEOs, for MRC's Job Placement Unit annually and a positive percentage change over prior year results
- Exceed 200 Employment Outcomes, or 5.5% of all SEOs, from Employer Account Management System annually
- Greater than 50% of JPS Successful Employment Outcomes are the result of employer referrals
- 40% Successful Employment Outcomes for consumers participating in Statewide Hiring Event achieve a annually, a 3% increase over prior year's outcomes
- Completion of quarterly meetings of the MassHire Business Services and Engagement Workgroup

Data Sources:

MRCIS, Workgroup materials

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Support business growth and sustainability elevating workforce services and developing diverse talent pipelines for businesses.

**MRC Goal 2:**

Successfully implement a joint venture using the MRC Competitive Integrated Employment Service (CIES) program and the Adult Clinical Community Services (ACCS) program with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to increase employment outcomes and create career pathways to better meet the needs of individuals with Behavioral Health needs utilizing the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) Model and the CIES Pay for Performance competitive employment model.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan.

Key Performance Indicators:

MRC will evaluate the ACCS program based on Key Performance Indicators.

- MRC ACCS Job Seekers initiated engagement with ACCS Counselors
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers initiated engagement with CIES-ACCS providers
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers initiated engagement with internal Job Placement Services
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers having a completed IPE within 45 days from eligibility
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers initiating Placement Services from CIES-ACCS providers or MRC Job Placement Unit Staff as part of their ACCS services

- MRC ACCS Job Seekers receiving Benefits Planning as part of their MRC ACCS services
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers successfully being placed into employment through CIES-ACCS and MRC Job Placement Unit services
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers are successfully maintaining employment for 90 and 180 days through ACCS-CIES and Internal MRC Job Placement services
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers placed who are working an average and median of 20+ hours/week
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers placed receiving an average hourly wage of \$12.50/hour and a median hourly wage of \$12.25/hour
- 80% of MRC ACCS Job Seekers satisfied with CIES-ACCS Services they received

Target:

To complete deployment of MRC-DMH employment initiative by the end of the Program Year 2020 (PY20). MRC is currently in the process of developing multi-year annual targets and will update as required.

- MRC ACCS Counselors will serve 900 job seekers based on the caseload capacity goal of 50 per caseload, 60% or more of cases will have eligibility completed within 30 days of application
- This is a newly established program, and baseline information will need to be established before creating a decisive goal. A goal of MRC ACCS Referrals will be established based on the program's first year results.
- This is a newly established program, and baseline information will need to be established before creating a decisive goal. A goal of MRC ACCS Job Seekers engaging with internal Job Placement Services will be established based on the program's first year results. 60% or more of MRC ACCS Job Seekers will have a completed IPE within 45 days from eligibility.
- 65% or more of MRC ACCS Job Seekers initiating Placement Services from CIES-ACCS providers within the program year.
- 95% or more of MRC ACCS Job Seekers with Social Security Insurance or Social Security Disability Insurance are receiving Benefits Planning as part of their MRC ACCS services
- 75% of MRC ACCS Job Seekers will be successfully being placed into employment through CIES-ACCS and MRC Job Placement Unit services.
- 75% of Job Seekers will successfully maintaining employment after placement for 90 and 180 days through ACCS-CIES and Internal MRC Job Placement services.
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers placed work an average and median of 22.5 hours/week.
- MRC ACCS Job Seekers placed receive an average hourly wage of \$12.50/hour and a median hourly wage of \$12.25/hour.
- MRC ACCS 80% of Job Seekers are satisfied with CIES-ACCS Services they received.

Data Sources:

MRCIS, CIES-ACCS Vendor Reports, MRC Satisfaction Survey

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, including quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 3:**

Fully implement the redesign of the Empower to Employ program in collaboration with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) in order to work to improve services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities receiving TANF support utilizing the Integrated Resource Team Model and the Pay for Performance competitive employment model. This project is part of MRC's efforts with its WIOA partners to align and coordinate services amongst state partners.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

MRC will evaluate the Empower to Employ program using Key Performance Indicators with DTA and will update as required. Complete an ISA between MRC and DTA and hire staff for MRC-DTA Individual Planning and Support Pilot Project. Use data from Key Performance Indicators to develop targets during PY2020 and PY2021 based on PY2019 data.

**Target:**

Completion of the Interagency Service Agreement, hiring of 100% of staff, and commencement of 100% of services for MRC-DTA Individual Planning by the end of the Program Year 2020 (PY2020), complete staff training for the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach.

Increase services to allow 100 or more placements annually for the project.

Expand project sites from 3 to 5 by the end of PY2020.

Employed project participants will earn an average hourly wage of \$14.50 or more and work an average of 28 hours or more per week.

**Data Sources:**

MRCIS

**Frequency of Evaluation:**

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

**Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:**

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment. =

**MRC Goal 4:**

Maximize Employment Retention for MRC Consumers Employed at Exit from Vocational Rehabilitation at the Second Quarter after Exit.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

Measure the following metric in order to gauge progress toward Goal 4:

- Employment Rate at the 2nd Quarter after Exit for MRC Consumers closed during the Current Program Year (Successful and Unsuccessful closures) based on Unemployment Insurance Wage Earnings.

**Target:**

Initial target is 60% pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA which are expected for PY2022.

Data Sources:

Closure Data from MRCIS, RSA—911 Report, Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Wage Data.

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 5:**

Maximize Employment Retention of competitive employment for MRC Consumers Employed at Exit from Vocational Rehabilitation at the Fourth Quarter after Exit and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 5:

- Employment Rate at the 4th Quarter after Exit for MRC Consumers closed during the Current Program Year (Successful and Unsuccessful closures) based on Unemployment Insurance Wage Earnings

Target:

Initial target is 55% pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA which are expected for PY2022.

Data Sources:

Closure Data from MRCIS, RSA-911 Report, Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Wage Data

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 6:**

Increase Median Quarterly Earnings for MRC Consumers Employed in competitive employment at Exit from Vocational Rehabilitation at the Second Quarter after Exit.

This aligns with Goal III of the Combined Overall WIOA State Plan based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 6:

- Median Quarterly Earnings at the 2nd Quarter after Exit for MRC Consumers closed during the Current Program Year (Successful and Unsuccessful closures) based on Unemployment Insurance Wage Earnings.

Target:

Initial target is \$3,900 quarterly earning pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA which are expected for PY2022.

Data Sources:

Closure Data from MRCIS, RSA-911 Report, Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Wage Data

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Increase credentialing and job placement outcomes for individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment.

**MRC Goal 7:**

Maximize the Number and Proportion of MRC Consumers with Recognized Secondary and/or Post-Secondary Credential Attainment during Participation in the MRC VR Program.

This aligns with Goal III of the Combined Overall WIOA State Plan and based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 7:

- Number of MRC Consumers obtaining post-secondary education credentials and/or obtaining a secondary school diploma or equivalent during participation in the MRC VR Program (or up to 1 year after exit from program.
  - For proportion, previous number divided by the total number of consumers served during the program year.

Target:

Establish baseline target based on currently available data and monitor progress. Pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA/DOL which are expected for PY2022.

Data Sources:

Level of Education Data from MRCIS, RSA—911 quarterly reporting

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 8:**

Maximize the Percentage of MRC Consumers Enrolled in Education and Training Programs leading to a recognized credential or employment achieving measurable skills gains during the Program Year.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 7:

- Number of MRC Consumers enrolled in education and training programs leading to employment or a recognized post-secondary credential achieving measurable skills gains during the program year with documented progress divided by total number of consumers receiving services through an IPE in the program year (Status 12-22).

Target:

25% is the proposed target to be submitted in the state plan. Pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA which are expected for PY2020.

Data Sources:

Level of Education Data from MRCIS, RSA-911 quarterly reporting, WIOA Annual Report

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 9:**

Provide Effective Services to Employers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to ensure retention rates of individuals placed in competitive employment.

This aligns with Goal I of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 9:

- Employment retention rate with the same employer at 2nd and 4th quarter after exit for MRC consumers closed during the current program year (Status 26 Closures) based on Employer Tax ID (EIN) in Unemployment Insurance Wage Data.
- # of repeat business customers (defined as a business where MRC places more than one job seeker during the program year)

Target:

400 or more repeat business customers annually where multiple job seekers are placed into employment. Pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA/DOL which are expected for PY2022.

Initial Target is 70% of job seekers retained at the same employer between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit. Establish and refine target based on baseline of data and track progress on performance. Pending establishment of negotiated standards from RSA/DOL which are expected for PY2022.

Data Sources:

Status 26 Closure Data from MRCIS, RSA—911 Report, Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Wage Data, WIOA Annual Report.

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 10:**

Maximize Successful Employment Outcomes for MRC Job Seekers for 90 Days or more and establish a new annual program outcome goal. Reset goal and target annually based on performance.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 10:

- Total Sum and Percentage of Successful Employment Outcomes for MRC Consumers for the Current Program Year (Status 26 Closures).

Target:

Achieve 3,700 or more successful employment outcomes in the program year.

Achieve a Rehabilitation Rate of 55.8% statewide as a result of consumer attaining successful employment outcomes.

Data Sources:

Status 26 Closure Data from MRCIS, Monthly Key Performance Indicators Tracking Report

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 11:**

Maximize the number of Consumers Exiting the MRC VR Program whose Primary Source of Economic Support is from their own Employment Earnings.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Next Steps:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 11:

- Proportion of Individuals Successfully Closed in Status 26 in the current fiscal year with a RSA-911 Employment Status Code of Competitive Employment in MRCIS with hourly wages at or above minimum wage (the higher of either State or Federal Minimum Wage; currently Massachusetts is higher at \$12.75) whose Primary Source of Support at Closure is Personal Income (Code 1) minus the proportion of those consumers whose primary source of support at application was personal income (Code 1).

Target:

Ratio of 60% or more.

Data Sources:

MRCIS, Monthly Key Performance Indicators Tracking Report

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated monthly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 12:**

Fully implement the re-design of Pre-ETS Services to Eligible and Potentially Eligible students (14 – 22) Maximize the Number and Percentage of high school students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services, including work-based learning experiences (Pre-ETS/Potentially Eligible) from MRC, either eligible or potentially eligible. Continue to coordinate Pre-ETS service delivery with partners and schools.

This aligns with Goal IV of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 13:

- Number of students (potentially eligible and eligible) receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from MRC and its contracted providers during the program year.
- Percent of students initiating services for each of the five Pre-ETS services (Work-Based Learning, Job Exploration Counseling, Counseling on Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education, Workplace Readiness Training, Self-Advocacy) from MRC and its contracted provider.
- Completion of an annual program evaluation report on Pre-ETS services provided by MRC and present findings to the SRC and MRC leadership.
- Explore ways to work with DESE and other partners to coordinate Pre-ETS services.

Target:

Serve 3,000 or more students receiving one or more of the five Pre-ETS services during the program year.

An average of 70% of students will initiate services for each of the five Pre-ETS services (Work-Based Learning, Job Exploration Counseling, Counseling on Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education, Workplace Readiness Training, Self-Advocacy) from MRC and its contracted providers during the program year.

Completion of an annual program evaluation report on Pre-ETS services provided by MRC and present findings to the SRC and MRC leadership.

Set up meetings with DESE and workforce partners to discuss coordination of Pre-ETS Services.

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated monthly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 13:**

Maximize the Number and Percentage of youth (defined as ages 14 through 24) consumers served by MRC completing education and training programs, including post-secondary education as part of MRC's efforts to coordinate services for youths with WIOA partners, including the MassHire workforce system.

This aligns with Goal IV of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 12:

- Number and Percent of Youth Age 14 to 24 Completing Education and Training Programs. Measured by the flow of Youth Consumers moving from Status 18 Training and Education into Status 20 Job Ready or Status 22 Job Placement during the month/fiscal year divided by the total number of youth consumers served in Status 18 Training and Education during the month/fiscal year.

Target:

At or above 200 or 3% of youth consumers per month completing training or education, annual total of 2500 or 16%

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated monthly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Increase credentialing and job placement outcomes for individuals, including youth with barriers to employment.

**MRC Goal 14:**

Create career pathways for job seekers through maximizing the Number of Successful Competitive Employment outcomes and the percent of Placements leading to Successful Employment Outcomes through MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) programs in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Providers.

This aligns with Goal II of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 14:

- Total Number of 90 Day Successful Employment Outcomes from CIES Program; Total Number of CIES Successful Employment Outcomes divided by the total number of 30-Day Placements for the CIES Program, % of CIES consumers served achieving a placement.

Target:

Exceed 850 Successful Employment Outcomes for CIES for the fiscal year and greater than 75% of CIES placements result in successful employment outcomes, and 60% or more of CIES consumers served during the year are placed into employment.

Complete the redesign and deployment of MRC CIES contracts successfully through the RFP and annual monitoring and program evaluation process to provide CIES Pay for Performance services (Annual Program Evaluation Report).

Data Source:

MRC CIES Quarterly Cumulative Utilization Report and Annual Program Evaluation Report

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated monthly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Support business growth and sustainability elevating workforce services and developing diverse talent pipelines for businesses.

**MRC Goal 15:**

Continue to provide consumers with an avenue to access employment and training opportunities through participation in the Donated Vehicle Program in partnership with Good News Garage and exploring other transportation partnerships.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 15:

- Number of Consumers Participating in the Donated Vehicle Program who obtain a successful employment outcome or who enter training and education (Status 18) divided by the number of consumers participating in the Donated Vehicle Program during the current fiscal year.
- Research additional transportation partnerships to assist with transportation including programs related to bicycling.

Target:

Greater than 90% of Consumers participating in the Donated Vehicle Program during the current fiscal year result in successful employment outcomes or enrollment in training or education (Status 18).

Issue 100 vehicles per program year utilizing the RFR process, for a total of 400 over the 4-year period.

Number of individuals who may be employed as a result of this program

90% or greater satisfaction with the program

Completion of research on additional transportation partnerships and presentation of a report to leadership and the SRC

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 16:**

Provide Quality Vocational Rehabilitation Services leading to increased successful employment outcomes to individuals with Autism. Coordinate services for individuals with Autism with partners.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 16:

- Number of successful employment outcomes as defined by Status 26 closures for MRC consumers with a Primary and/or Secondary RSA Disability Cause Code of 08 and employment rate for these consumers.
- Number of consumers served on the Autism Spectrum

Target:

Equal or greater to 175 consumers employed per program year

Modernize the Life Skill mapping planning process for individuals with Autism through completion of an enhanced procurement/RFR to provide these services.

75% employment rate or greater for consumers on the autism spectrum receiving Life Mapping services

55.8% or greater employment rate for consumers with autism spectrum receiving VR services

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 17:**

Continued Outreach to the Asian community to identify strategies for serving this underserved population.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Implementation of additional Focus Groups to MRC regions with high concentrations of Asian community, such as Braintree and Boston

Increase in the number and percent of Asian consumers served by MRC

Target:

Complete focus groups or community meetings in Braintree and/or Boston, and/or other areas with high population concentration of Asian communities by the end of the program year, with consultation of the diversity and bilingual committees to review results and to develop best practices in collaboration with community organizations for increasing outreach efforts and services to the Asian community based on the comprehensive needs assessment survey conducted by the SRC, to present to agency leadership.

Develop and implement a new consumer engagement program which will include coordination of outreach services to community organizations in areas with underserved populations.

Increase in the number and percent of Asian consumers served by MRC from prior year.

Data Sources:

Program evaluation program data, MRCIS, SRC engagement work plan.

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 18:**

Research Best Practices Models to create career pathways and increase employment of Individuals with Disabilities based on recommendations provided by the SRC Executive Committee.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Completion of research of best practices, models, or capstone projects for the development of new programs intended to provide enhanced training and job placement for individuals with disabilities for presentation to the leadership team and the SRC.

Target:

Completion of research and completion of a report by the end of the program year for presentation to MRC Leadership and the SRC.

Data Sources:

CSAVR, Google/Electronic Reference Libraries.

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 19:**

Expand the use of occupational goal information from MRC job seekers to inform job placement efforts. Share occupational data and coordinate sharing of labor market information with WIOA Workforce Partners including MassHire.

This aligns with Goal V of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Key Performance Indicators:

Develop a report of MRC job seekers based on vocational goals in the MRCIS system by Standard Occupational Code (SOC Code) compared to job placements and outcomes for job seekers by SOC Code.

Track placements and occupational goals by SOC code and SOC category.

Research strategies for linking occupational code data with industry classification data.

Revamp labor market information reports for MRC staff.

Target:

Complete reports and presentation of findings to agency leadership and the Job Placement Unit by the end of the program year.

Research strategies and develop recommendations for linking occupational code and industry classification data to guide job placement efforts, sector employment, and to assist with coordination of business services with WIOA partners.

Complete new labor market report templates for MRC staff.

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Ensure Massachusetts has a world-class service delivery system by integrating use of modern tools and techniques.

**MRC Goal 20:**

Research and develop ways to conduct outreach to college students and other groups to increase awareness of MRC services and research additional resources to assist MRC consumers who are in post-secondary education programs.

This aligns with Goal V of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Completion of research into ways MRC can outreach to college students to increase awareness of MRC services. Develop additional resources and programs that may assist MRC consumers in post-secondary education program. Present findings to the leadership team and the SRC.

Target:

Completion of research into ways MRC can outreach to college students to increase awareness of MRC services. Develop additional resources and programs that may assist MRC consumers in post-secondary education program. Develop a report and present findings to the leadership team and the SRC.

Data Sources:

Google/Electronic Reference Libraries

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 21:**

Implementation of a new MRC MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program where MRC is coordinating training services for MRC Job Seekers through the MassHire Career Center network, as part of efforts to coordinate service delivery across WIOA workforce partners in Massachusetts.

This aligns with Goals I and III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Key Performance Indicators:

MRC will develop Key Performance Indicators for this project with MassHire. Use data from Key Performance Indicators to establish a baseline and develop targets during PY2020 and PY2021 based on PY2019 data.

Completion of an annual program evaluation report on the MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program and present findings to the SRC, MRC leadership, and WIOA partners.

Target:

Completion of Key Performance Indicators, Establishment of baseline data and develop targets by PY2021 based on project data.

Completion of an annual program evaluation report on the MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program and complete presentation of findings to the SRC, MRC leadership, and WIOA partners.

Data Sources:

MRCIS, Reports from MassHire

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

**MRC Goal 22:**

Provide Quality Vocational Rehabilitation Services leading to increased successful employment outcomes to individuals with behavioral health needs. Coordinate services for individuals with Behavioral Health Needs[1] with partners.

This aligns with Goal III of the WIOA Combined State Plan and is based on the results of the MRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the SRC Recommendations.

Key Performance Indicators:

Evaluate the following criteria in order to track progress of Goal 16:

- Number of successful employment outcomes as defined by Status 26 closures for MRC consumers with a Primary and/or Secondary RSA Disability Code of 18 and employment rate for these consumers (excluding those participating in the MRC DMH ACCS program)
- Number of consumers served with a Disability Code of 18 during the program year

Target:

Equal or greater to 600 consumers employed per program year (excluding those consumers participating in the MRC DMH ACCS program)

Employment rate of 55.8% or greater for consumers with Disability Code 18 receiving MRC VR services (excluding consumers participating in the MRC DMH ACCS program)

Data Sources:

MRCIS

Frequency of Evaluation:

Progress toward completing this goal will be evaluated quarterly and annually.

Overall WIOA Combined State Plan Category:

Expand capacity of the workforce system to accelerate employment, especially for those with challenges to employment.

[1] Behavioral Health Needs are defined by RSA within Policy Directive *RSA-PD-16-04* as Disability Code 18: Psychosocial Impairments (e.g., interpersonal and behavioral impairments, difficulty coping)

### 3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

#### A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

MRC has based its goals and priorities on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted in collaboration with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) during fiscal year 2018. The purpose of the survey is to capture the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. The goals and priorities are also based on recommendations and input from the SRC and input from MRC Senior Management. Additionally, these goals include the new WIOA Common Performance Measures.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in conjunction with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) conducted its most recent annual Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment (CSNA) in the Fall of 2019. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires the MRC to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment at least every three years, but the MRC administers it on an annual basis. The information and findings are incorporated into the MRC's section of the Massachusetts WIOA Combined State Plan, as well as in MRC's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance activities. The findings on consumer needs listed in the CSNA are presented and shared with MRC Senior Management and VR staff, the full SRC, and other key stakeholders as part of the MRC's State Plan and continuous quality improvement processes. It is also available to the public via the MRC website. The 2018 CSNA process constituted a number of approaches, including: a consumer survey (with additional content for students with disabilities on Pre-Employment Transition Services); focus groups; analysis of key statistical and demographic information and facts taken from the MRCIS system, US Census Bureau Data, Bureau of Labor Statistics Data and the Annual Disability Statistical Compendium, findings from other reports

and surveys including the Consumer, Provider, and Counselor Satisfaction surveys; youth and employer surveys; and collaboration and discussion with the SRC and other key stakeholders.

The MRC CSNA report and appendix can be found on MRC's website at the following links:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/10/10/FY2018-MRC-Comprehensive-Statewide-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2018-comprehensive-statewide-vocational-rehabilitation-consumer-needs-assessment-appendix/download>

## B. The State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

WIOA in its goals and priorities. MRC will continue to report data to RSA on these measures for PY2020 and further program years as specified in the final requirements for the WIOA Combined/Unified State Plan. Since the VR program only began reporting data for the common measures as of July 1, 2017, MRC only has initial data for PY2017 and PY2018 for Measurable Skills Gains and PY2018 for Employment Rate at 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit and Median Earnings during 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit, and for Effectiveness of Serving Employers. Data for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit Employment Rate and Credential Obtainment will be available after the completion of PY2019. MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance department will continue to analyze the data as it becomes available and create a report for management on the common measures. A data dashboard of this information will also be pursued to push data down to staff at area offices and to counselors as applicable.

### MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

#### MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TWO YEAR PERFORMANCE

MRC WIOA Common Measure Performance, PY17 and PY18*	PY17 (FY18)	PY18 (FY19)
Employment Rate at 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	48.2%
Employment Rate at 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	N/A*
Median Earnings at 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	\$4,332.83
Credential Obtainment Rate	N/A*	N/A*
Measurable Skills Gains	13.1%	8.4%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers – Retention from 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	75%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers - Repeat Business Customers	15.0%	11.6% =

\*Note: Complete Employment at Fourth Quarter after Exit and Credential Obtainment Rate are not available yet for PY17 and PY18 and were not included by RSA in the PY17 and PY18 WIOA Annual Report Data for Vocational Rehabilitation.

C. Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has an active and productive State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The SRC works closely with the MRC on ways to improve Vocational Rehabilitation Services for individuals with disabilities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on an ongoing basis.

Information and input from SRC members, SRC committees, quarterly SRC meetings, information from the SRC annual report, and input from other consumer meetings and training were used by MRC to develop its goals best designed to address the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities. The agency and the SRC used the results of their review of consumer satisfaction, the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Report, other evaluation data and reports of the effectiveness of the VR program in their development of the goals and priorities.

Additionally, findings and recommendations from RSA monitoring activities conducted under section 107 is also incorporated in MRC's goals. MRC used information from RSA's 2017 Monitoring Report of MRC in the development of its goals for the State Plan.

## **m. Order of Selection**

Describe:

### **1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:**

#### **A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure in place but currently is not operating under an Order of Selection. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

MRC utilizes a fiscal forecasting process to determine whether to implement its OOS policy and to determine if funding is available to serve all eligible individuals and to determine if categories need to be opened or closed. MRC obtains input, guidance, and an official recommendation from the Statewide Rehabilitation Council as part of the process to determine whether an OOS needs to be established or modified.

A functional assessment is provided to all individuals determined eligible to determine their priority category assignment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.42. The definition of the priority categories and the order to be followed if MRC were to implement an OOS is outlined in MRC's OOS policy VR 19-01.

#### **B. The justification for the order**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure in place but currently is not operating under an Order of Selection. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

#### **C. The service and outcome goals**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure in place but currently is not operating under an Order of Selection. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

#### **D. Time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order; and**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure in place but currently is not operating under an Order of Selection. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

## **E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities**

MRC has an Order of Selection (OOS) policy and procedure in place but currently is not operating under an Order of Selection. All categories are open for services and all individuals eligible for VR services are receiving such services.

## **2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment**

MRC has elected to take the option of provision of services to VR eligible individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment who are at risk of losing their job. These individuals, upon provision of appropriate documentation, will be placed into services. MRC projects that it will serve 500 individuals annually in PY2020 and PY2021 in need of job retention services at an average cost of \$1,000 per individual, resulting in 350 projected employment outcomes annually in both PY2020 and PY2021.

## **n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds**

### **1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services**

MRC will be utilizing Title I funds and Title VI B funds to provide Supported Employment Services. MRC has developed a contingency plan to use Title I funds to provide Supported Employment Services if Title VI B are not appropriated in the federal budget. MRC's Supported Employment Services are provided under the notation that rates, fees, and expenditures are subject to applicable Commonwealth of Massachusetts statutory, regulatory, and related requirements governing purchases of services and goods. Such parameters of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts govern, amongst other things, methods of procurement. Further, all providers of supported employment services need to qualify through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' interagency contractual process. To the maximum extent possible, the Commission and the Commonwealth utilizes procurement methods which facilitate the provision of services in a manner that affords individuals meaningful choices among the entities (providers) that deliver services.

MRC establishes consumer need for this service on a fiscal year basis and then funds Supported Employment services for those consumers in that specific geographic location to help inform staffing and service delivery needs. In PY20 MRC has a goal to provide Supported Employment Services to 475 consumers across the state through its area offices and its Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) procurement. MRC will prioritize Supported Employment services to consumers with Mental Health needs, Developmental Disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Autism, and severe learning disabilities, amongst other needs.

## 2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

### A. The provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

MRC will use 50% of Title VI B funds as represented by the Supported Employment-B award to provide supported employment services to youth based on their needs and services outlined in their individualized plan for employment. Services will be provided to assist youth with the most significant disabilities in choosing, obtaining, and maintaining competitive employment based on their interest, abilities, and skills. Title VI funds will only be used to provide supported employment services to youth once they are placed in a job. Title I funds will be used to provide supported employment services to youth prior to job placement.

These funds will also be used to provide extended services to up to 4 years for youths with the most significant disabilities until the youth reaches age 25 to assist them in maintaining and advancing in competitive employment. As a contingency plan if Title VI B Supported Employment funds are not appropriated, MRC will also use Title I funds and State funding to provide supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities based on their needs.

### B. How the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with other human service agencies to identify and secure funding and comparable benefits for extended supports for individuals in Supported Employment, including youth with the most significant disabilities. Funding for extended services is available from several sources contingent upon the consumer's disability, eligibility and the resources available to each state agency. This service delivery system is currently in place enabling state agencies to cost share the appropriate services needed for consumers to choose, find and maintain meaningful competitive supported employment. With the implementation of this initiative to partner with other human service agencies, we have seen an increase in the availability of resources for extended services. However, the available funding is administered at local levels and each situation handled individually. Sources of funding include:

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (State Revenue), Department of Developmental Services, Department of Mental Health, Medicaid Waiver Supported Employment Services, MRC Statewide Head Injury Program, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Social Security Administration Work Incentives, as well as Natural Supports from employers and other comparable benefits.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission continues to promote collaboration with stakeholders regarding supported employment services and extended services. This is also evidenced in the number of jointly funded programs that have developed. Some examples of these collaborative programs are services jointly funded for individuals with intellectual disabilities between the MRC and the Developmental Disability Services (DDS); for expansion of partnership between MRC and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for individuals with mental health needs; for individuals who have traumatic brain injuries in conjunction with the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; and for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

## **o. State's Strategies**

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

### **1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a needs assessment (CSNA) during Federal Fiscal Year 2018 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state. Strategies of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs are established consistent with the needs and trends identified in the survey results as necessary for vocational rehabilitation to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expand activities. These strategies are designed to overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs, and promote the abilities of people with disabilities to reduce stigmas. Strategies are developed with consultation of the SRC and other stakeholders.

Some strategies developed through this process, as described in the sections below, include development and refinement of MRC's pre-employment transition service (Pre-ETS) contracting; the development of a new employment model with the Department of Mental Health to assist consumers with mental health needs to obtain employment (This new model is designed to rapidly engage individuals in the Vocational Rehabilitation process.); and expansion of a project with the Department of Transitional Assistance to use the concepts of the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model to engage and employ individuals with disabilities receiving TANF benefits, among other strategies. MRC is in the last two years of a \$5 million demonstration grant on work-based learning experiences by RSA for students with disabilities entitled Transition Pathway Services which will be used to identify and evaluate best practices for improving services to students across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Additional details on these and other strategies can be found in the following sections.

### **2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis**

MRC provides an array of assistive technology services and devices to individuals with disabilities through all parts of the VR program and with partners.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is the state operator of the programs funded under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act. These include MassMatch, a program that provides comprehensive information about the availability and funding of assistive technology, the Assistive Technology Program, and the Assistive Technology Loan Program that provides low-interest loans to consumers when other resources are not available to purchase needed adaptive technology.

MRC participates in the REquipment program in collaboration with the Department of Developmental Services. REquipment is a durable medical equipment (DME) re-use program offering free refurbished wheelchairs, scooters, shower chairs and more to adults, children and elders living across Massachusetts. This assistive technology service helps people with disabilities in addressing equipment needs to assist them in meeting their employment goals and living independently in the community.

Another program is the MRC Adaptive Assistance program, operated by MRC and two contracted providers, Easter Seals and United Cerebral Palsy. For the purposes of this program, adaptive assistance is defined as devices, aids, and enhancements for the elimination of barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities, primarily individuals with the most significant disabilities. Adaptive assistance is defined as services that either:

1. supplements or enhances functions of the individual or
2. that impacts their environment through changes, e.g., workshop modifications. Rehabilitation technology specialists may prescribe both types of rehabilitation technology services in order to create and/or maximize employment opportunities for an individual with a disability. The rehabilitation technology services are provided to open and/or expand vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities.

MRC also provides vehicle modification and home modification services to Vocational Rehabilitation consumers with disabilities. The Vehicle Modification Program provides driving evaluations, vehicle modifications and equipment installation to privately owned vehicles of individuals with disabilities to enable them to achieve an employment outcome by removing barriers to transportation.

Vehicle modification services include structural (major) vehicle modifications, non-structural (minor) vehicle modifications and driver evaluation services. Structural modifications may include a lowered floor on mini and full-size vans, raised roof, raised entry, automatic wheelchair lift, automatic door opener, servo primary controls, reduced-effort steering and braking and similar modifications. Non-structural modifications may include mechanical hand controls, car-top wheelchair carriers, scooter lifts, steering knobs and similar modifications.

The Adaptive Housing Program provides housing evaluations, architectural services, housing modifications, and equipment installation to individuals with disabilities to enable them to achieve an employment outcome by removing barriers to living in their current home.

Adaptive Housing services include major and minor home modifications. Major home modifications may include wheelchair ramps and lifts, stairlifts, bathroom modifications (such as roll-in showers, roll under sinks, higher toilets and wider doors), and kitchen modifications (such as lowered counters, and roll under cooktops). Minor Home Modifications may include door openers, grab bars, handrails, and widening of doors.

Vehicle Modification and Home Modification services are available to MRC consumers who need these services in their Individualized Plans for Employment.

MRC also works with employers to help facilitate accommodations and to facilitate the provision of on-the-job assistive technology devices to individuals with disabilities employed through the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Persons served under MRC's Assistive Technology programs described above are applicants or consumers of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The target population is individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom rehabilitation technology services are considered to potentially eliminate barriers to vocational rehabilitation and/or enhance vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities. These services are available statewide.

Population includes:

1. Potential applicants undergoing evaluation of vocational rehabilitation, especially when the disabling condition of the individual is of such a nature and severity that the inability of rehabilitation technology services to eliminate barriers to and/or enhance capacities could result in a determination of ineligibility;
2. Eligible vocational rehabilitation consumers for whom rehabilitation technology is being considered to assist the consumer to attain intermediate objectives and long-range rehabilitation goals; and

3. Eligible employed individuals to eliminate barriers to and/or enhance capacities for successful job performance.

Adaptive assistance evaluations, training, and consultations for individuals with disabilities served by the vocational rehabilitation program were:

1. Assessments of functional capacities of individuals with disabilities to include determinations of if and how the provision of rehabilitation technology services is likely to affect the capacity of the individual to perform successfully in competitive employment and/or enhance opportunities for the development of capacities for competitive employment;
2. Recommendations of specific rehabilitation technology for individuals with disabilities to include descriptions of related barriers to be eliminated and descriptions of functional capacities to be attained;
3. Rehabilitation technology training to affect the capacity of the individual with a disability to utilize specific assistive technology devices (equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities) and thus perform successfully in competitive employment and/or enhance opportunities for the development of capacities for competitive employment; and
4. Consultations to be provided to Commission staff to address the elimination of disability-related barriers, improvement of opportunities for competitive employment, and the development of functional capacities of individuals.

### 3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program

MRC has made a commitment to outreach to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are also ethnic and cultural minorities, especially to Asian communities who have been identified as underserved. MRC is committed to hiring bilingual staff to more effectively reach those communities and to the expectation that directors from local area offices be involved in outreach to local community agencies and organizations, especially those that serve ethnic and cultural minorities.

MRC also has an ongoing statewide Bilingual/Bicultural vocational rehabilitation counselor group who meet on a regular basis to: discuss and share resources on how to outreach to and serve cultural and ethnic minorities, develop new or translate existing agency forms and brochures, and develop and conduct training programs in collaboration with the Commission's staff development unit for local and district offices. These counselors will continue to reach out to these populations and work to break down barriers to seeking and enrolling in vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, as populations grow MRC will continue to track long term trends and has discussed plans to build additional bi-lingual caseloads as appropriate.

MRC conducted a focus group during PY2018 in its Lowell Office, which has a higher concentration of Asian consumers. MRC will also be conducting additional focus groups in other offices with higher concentrations of Asian consumers to gather further information on how MRC can better address the needs of this underserved population. Based on the results of the Lowell Focus group and SRC input, MRC also has developed a workgroup and workplan to focus on outreach efforts to Asian and other minority communities. Strategies and resources for outreach efforts will be developed as part of this workgroup. As part of these efforts, MRC will consult its Bilingual Committee and the SRC to develop appropriate training programs for staff.

MRC has translated key forms and informational materials into Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French Creole, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Mandarin Chinese as outlined in MRC's Language Access Plan. MRC has also translated all correspondence letters in its electronic case management system into Asian languages spoken by MRC staff including: Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, Khmer and Vietnamese. MRC also has contracts for foreign language translation services. As part of its working group established to work on outreach to the Asian and other diverse communities, MRC will be seeking to develop and translate new outreach and referral information.

MRC will also continue to work with its Bilingual Committee to review and revise the Commonwealth's Multi Cultural Population Resource Directory as needed. This directory offers culturally and linguistically appropriate services for many diverse populations.

#### **4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services)**

Based on the findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, MRC continues to implement strategies to address the needs of students with disabilities, including Pre-Employment Transition Services, through many efforts, including a multi-million dollar procurement to provide Pre-ETS services. MRC has revised its policies and has enhanced its case management system to provide (and is now providing) Pre-Employment Transition Services to potentially eligible consumers. For eligible consumers, specific services are addressed in the consumers' individualized plan for employment based on their interests, choice, and needs. MRC continues its efforts to closely coordinate transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services with local educational agencies.

Through its MOU with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), MRC has established a working group to identify needs and best practices to improve and expand services for students with disabilities, including Pre-Employment Transition Services. MRC is amending its MOU with DESE to further coordinate service efforts and DESE has produced guidance for local school districts on working with MRC to coordinate transition services. This is incorporated as part of MRC's strategic planning process

MRC has a Transition team approach to oversee transition, coordination with educational authorities, and implementation of strategies to improve and expand services to students with disabilities. MRC is also in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of a 5 year, \$5 million demonstration grant on work-based learning experiences by RSA for students with disabilities entitled Transition Pathway Services which will be used to identify and evaluate best practices for improving services to students across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

#### **5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State**

Over the past several years, MRC and community rehabilitation providers have worked in partnership to develop and operate a variety of programs and services to assist individuals with disabilities to

achieve suitable employment outcomes. These programs include: Vocational Services; Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES), MRC's revised Pre-Employment Transition Services procurement (including provision of Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students), MRC's Transition Pathway Services grant program, and many other support services that are essential in vocational rehabilitation.

MRC recently adjusted the CIES model based on lessons learned and input from its staff, Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) partners, and other stakeholders. These adjustments are designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CIES services for MRC consumers. MRC also incorporated peer support and flexible supports into the CIES procurement.

MRC is also working closely with CRPs on a new collaborative effort with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to provide contracted employment services under the CIES program for consumers participating in the Department of Mental Health's Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model. This program began in July 2019. As part of MRC ACCS services through CIES, MRC has entered into Business Associate Agreements (BAAs) with CIES ACCS providers to assist with facilitating and coordinating services between MRC, DMH, and providers for participating consumers.

MRC and community providers collaborate in developing programs and services in such forums as: Statewide Rehabilitation Council that meets quarterly, quarterly meetings with representatives of the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, meetings with the Massachusetts Providers Council, periodic district wide meetings with community rehabilitation programs, interagency and cross disability agency councils, task specific work teams, the Massachusetts Association of People Supporting Employment First (MAAPSE), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Association (MRA), and other provider trade groups across the Commonwealth. In addition, MRC Business Improvement Partners and MRC local area office staff also conduct quarterly on-site review meetings to assess performance and provide feedback to assist CRPs providing services for MRC.

## 6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA

MRC has established an electronic reporting and performance measurement system to monitor, analyze, and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs. This system will allow the agency to make improvements to ensure optimal performance in accordance with the WIOA common performance measures. MRC continues to establish baseline data on these measures and began reporting data to RSA in the fall of 2017. MRC has also developed and provided several trainings in coordination with WINTAC on the Common Performance Measures which has been delivered to MRC managers, staff, and the SRC. MRC also participates in a cross-agency workgroup with workforce partners on performance measurement under the Common Measures.

MRC continues to develop strategies designed to improve MRC's performance under the WIOA Common Performance Measures. MRC is focusing on the development of strategies to promote the placement of consumers into high quality careers with higher wages and benefits. MRC will also be developing training strategies for staff and its provider network to focus on high quality employment outcomes and seek ways to increase the median wage by focusing on more full-time jobs rather than part-time jobs. MRC will also strive to provide benefits planning on the front end of the placement process to ensure consumers understand how working may affect public benefits they may be receiving and to know about work benefits that are available for them to obtain high paying and self-sustainable employment.

MRC is also conducting ongoing training on the Common Performance Measures with counselors, managers, supervisors, the SRC, and providers to ensure team-orientated outcomes that will improve performance under the Common Performance Measures. MRC will also develop internal performance

reports to track performance on the caseload, office, district, and statewide level to assist in these efforts using data from its Case Management System.

## 7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities

As a key partner in the statewide Workforce Investment system, MRC continues to work towards to strengthen the alignment of the VR program with the other core programs of the workforce development system. MRC subscribes to the overall vision for the Massachusetts Workforce Investment system as described below.

All Massachusetts residents, including individuals with disabilities, will benefit from a seamless system of education and workforce services that supports career pathways for individuals and leads to a more informed, educated, and skilled workforce, which meets the Commonwealth's businesses' demands and sustains a thriving economy. To achieve this vision, Massachusetts will engage businesses to understand their needs and develop an integrated education and workforce system that supports career pathways to prepare residents with foundational, technical, professional skills and information and connections to postsecondary education and training. MRC will work with its core workforce partners to:

1. Design career pathways across partners aligned with business demand;
2. Improve foundational skills and transition to postsecondary education and training for individuals with barriers to employment;
3. Assist individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency through support services, labor market driven credentialing, and employment; and
4. Meet the needs of job seekers and businesses who engage in the public workforce system (including partner programs).

As part of implementing strategies to meet this common vision, MRC is collaborating with other core partners in the workforce investment system to reduce unemployment of individuals with disabilities, to provide effective services to employers throughout the state, and to seek out collaborative opportunities including possible projects and grants that may assist individuals with disabilities across Massachusetts in obtaining competitive employment. MRC has entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with its workforce partners. This MOU outlines the principles for the continued development of the Massachusetts Workforce System. The MOU articulates a coordinated vision for organizing the public workforce system.

MRC continues its efforts to work closely with other partners in the workforce development system to assess performance and develop methods to track shared consumers across the workforce system, among other collaborations. MRC participates in numerous workgroups such as the WIOA Steering Committee, WIOA Systems Integration Workgroup, and other committees who are working on the alignment and improvement of services under the workforce system, including services to individuals with disabilities. MRC is working with its workforce partners on the development of Workforce Connect as a consumer-facing and staff-facing dashboard and case management overlay to track shared consumers across the workforce system, among others.

Also, MRC has partnered with its workforce partners to develop the MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program where MRC is coordinating training services for MRC Job Seekers through the MassHire Career Center network, as part of efforts to coordinate service delivery across WIOA workforce partners in Massachusetts. This program was initiated in 2019.

MRC continues to work on aligning its services and increasing its presence at the career centers as MRC is a required partner in the Career Center network. The MRC Commissioner serves on the State

Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), and each area director has a formal relationship with at least one career center. In addition, area directors or other MRC staff are on local workforce investment boards. MRC has counselors assigned to each career center who are scheduling hours at the local career centers to provide an array of vocational rehabilitation services. MRC has leasing space at all career centers to further increase MRC's presence and operates a satellite office in the Southbridge Career Center. MRC has finalized its MOUs and infrastructure and cost-sharing agreements with local areas and the Career Centers which were negotiated on the local level. MRC's assigned counselors and job placement staff continue to work closely with local career centers to provide high quality vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities seeking expanded employment opportunities and to make the career centers more responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities including providing disability sensitivity training for career center staff, and ensuring the career centers are accessible to all job seekers.

MRC will also work with its partners such as Community College and employer partners to coordinate training opportunities for individuals with disabilities on nights and weekends to accommodate those who are not able to attend trainings during traditional work hours.

## 8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:

### A. Achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a needs assessment during Federal Fiscal Year 2018 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state. The strategies of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs are established by the Senior Leadership Team, consistent with the needs and trends identified in the needs assessment, in order to achieve its goals and priorities, and support innovation and expansion activities. These strategies are designed to overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs. MRC will utilize the following strategies to achieve each of its stated goals and priorities, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment.

1. MRC engages in outreach activities to identify and serve individuals with the most significant disabilities which includes staff outreach to community and state agencies, schools, other public institutions, and the general public by contact and presentation by MRC local office, district and administrative staff, printed brochures, and consumer meetings and trainings.
2. The MRC Supported Employment Program provides Supported Employment Services to consumers statewide through its network of Area Offices, working with community rehabilitation providers, links with the local school system for transitioning youth and other state agencies such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health, especially through its clubhouse programs.
3. MRC will work closely with the SRC. A workplan has been created for the MRC and SRC to track progress on the SRC recommendations that informed the development of MRC's goals and strategies. The workplan is blended and braided with the SRC's objectives as listed in their annual report.
4. MRC continues to develop new partnerships to help enhance and coordinate services for individuals with disabilities. This includes the new training program with the MassHire Career Centers, the new employment initiative with the Department of Mental Health, and the Empower to Employ Initiative with the Department of Transitional Assistance.
5. MRC provides an array of assistive technology services and devices to individuals with disabilities through the VR program and with partners. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is the state operator of the programs funded under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act. These include MassMatch, a program that provides comprehensive

information about the availability and funding of assistive technology, the Assistive Technology Program, and the Assistive Technology Loan Program that provides low-interest loans to consumers when other resources are not available to purchase needed adaptive technology. MRC has identified how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the Vocational Rehabilitation process; and has worked to ensure that assistive technology services and devices are available and provided to individuals with disabilities across the state.

6. MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance Department staff conducts training with agency managers, supervisors, and local staff at meetings and at district and local area offices on the Common Performance Measures and overall agency performance, what they mean, how they are derived from agency statistics and how they impact agency performance. The Analytics and Quality Assurance Department also presents and disseminates information on Common Performance Measures, Data trends, and Needs Assessment results on a regular basis. Additionally, this is also presented to new counseling staff as part of their initial training. The Commission also provides automated reports online for managers to use in educating staff and developing strategies for correcting performance in these areas.

## B. Support innovation and expansion activities; and

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the Commission under section 110 of the Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. Consistent with the findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and goals and priorities identified in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council, the Commission uses funds to support innovation and expansion activities to address the needs of individuals with disabilities, primarily individuals with the most significant disabilities. Activities include:

1. On-The-Job Trainings and Job-Driven Trainings with Employer Partners: MRC continues to expand Job-Driven Trainings (JDT) and On-the-Job (OJT) training and evaluations. MRC has found that many consumers who participate in an OJT or Job-Driven training obtain employment with the OJT or JDT. Other participants are able to obtain employment elsewhere as a result of their participation in the OJT or JDT because they gained recent work experience and/or developed job-specific skills. MRC has created job driven training programs to date with the Home Depot, CVS Health, Lowes, G4S Security Solutions, the Kraft Group, MAPFRE Insurance, Advance Auto Parts, and Enterprise Holdings, and Allied Universal Security Services, amongst other employers. In addition, MRC holds job-driven trainings for human service jobs and has started to offer a job-driven training for IT jobs. MRC is also exploring a cyber security job driven training program partnership with CISCO Academy; also, it is working on new job-driven training programs with Travelers Insurance, and BJ's Wholesale Club, and developing new partnerships with UPS and Fed Ex. MRC will also work with its employer partners to coordinate training opportunities for individuals with disabilities on nights and weekends to accommodate those who are not able to attend these trainings during traditional work hours.
2. MRC - Department of Transitional Assistance Empower to Employ Project: MRC and the Department of Transitional Assistance have developed a project known as Empower to Employ designed to increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities receiving TANF benefits. The partner agencies use a jointly-funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services. Through this collaborative effort, DTA and MRC are utilizing an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to facilitate recruitment (pre-engagement), engagement, service delivery and placement.

3. MRC-Department of Mental Health Employment Initiative: MRC and DMH have undertaken a new initiative as of July 2019 where MRC coordinates employment services for individuals with mental health needs served by the Department of Mental Health's Adult Clinical Community Services (ACCS) program in collaboration with DMH and its vendors. The new MRC/DMH Employment Initiative is designed to build an integrated employment framework that inspires and engages innovation to ensure full employment for people with mental health needs at the same rate of employment as the general population. The focus of this initiative is on individuals served by DMH through Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS). These individuals are being referred to MRC for Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services. To serve these individuals, MRC is using an Integrated Resource Team approach, where partner agencies and supports come together to craft and jointly own a Job Seeker's employment goal, to coordinate wrap-around services and ongoing collaboration and communication. MRC has hired dedicated staff with funding through the ISA to work with ACCS referrals. These counselors will have smaller caseloads and will work with MRC CIES providers, DMH providers, DMH, and other MRC staff to rapidly engage with consumers, develop a plan for employment, and coordinate services designed to assist these consumers in achieving successful employment outcomes.
4. Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Grant Project: MRC is in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of a 5-year demonstration grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) known as the Transition Pathway Services Grant. This project is evaluating best practices for provision of work-based learning experiences to students with disabilities through a coordinated model of services provided by community partners including MRC, career centers, independent living centers, pre-employment transition vendors and local educational authorities. The goal is to increase employment and/or post-secondary education opportunity for students with disabilities based on their abilities, skills, needs and employment opportunities in the local economy.
5. IT enhancements to modernize the agency's technology and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services. These include a provider portal to assist in reporting and tracking the provision of Pre-ETS services to potentially eligible consumers, to enhance tracking and reporting on internal job placement services, to develop a consumer portal for information and referral, and to develop a paperless system using Electronic Data Management.
6. MRC's Job Placement Unit operates an annual Federal Hiring Event in partnership with MCB, other workforce partners, and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) in their Boston and Hartford offices. The Hiring Event assists consumers with securing competitive employment comparable with their interests and abilities. MRC prepares consumers to interview for available jobs with employers participating in the event. It focuses on direct job placement with participating employers and is not simply a career fair. In 2019, MRC completed its 7th annual Hiring Event. Since 2013, Over 480 individuals have been successfully employed across the Commonwealth through participating in this annual one day event. The aggregate annual wages of all successfully employed consumers through the hiring event since 2013 is approximately \$10.31 million. Consumers have been employed in a variety of occupations ranging from office and administrative support, health care, protective service, human services, and management occupations, amongst others.
7. Transportation: MRC is working diligently to address transportation barriers faced by its consumers. MRC has updated transportation resource fact sheets on its website and makes them available to consumers at its Area Office. MRC has also hired a transportation coordinator through its Transition Pathway Services (TPS) grant and MRC will document lessons learned and best practices at the end of the grant period. One major achievement has been that MRC consumers are now automatically eligible for the Transition Access Pass (TAP) program. This program offers half-fare rides on all Regional Transit Authorities across the Commonwealth. MRC also works with the Executive Office of Health and Human Service Transportation office on transportation for consumers and operates an innovative car donation program to assist individuals in accessing worksites. MRC has a benefits planning

grant to assist consumer in their efforts to go to work, which can include the Plan for Achieving Self Supports (PASS) and impairment-related work expenses as incentives for an individual to go to work. MRC also uses IRS Section 44 as a strategy to assist consumers with Transportation needs. MRC will continue to work with transportation agencies to explore other creative transportation options for consumers.

8. **Employment of Individuals with Disabilities in State Jobs:** MRC places numerous individuals with disabilities into state government jobs each year, including at MRC. MRC has a diverse workforce with a high percentage of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. We have a key contact with the state's Human Resources Division to facilitate employment for consumers in state jobs, including the provision of On-The-Job training and internship opportunities with state and federal agencies. The Commonwealth also participates in MRC's annual hiring event to provide information to consumers on available state job opportunities, including how to apply.
9. **Research Best Practices Models to Increase Employment of Individuals with Disabilities:** MRC will continue to research best practice models designed to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts.
10. **Learn to Earn:** MRC is engaged with the Learn to Earn initiative. Learn to Earn is a comprehensive approach to providing unemployed and underemployed individuals who are receiving assistance from public benefit programs with the supports, skills, and credentials they need to gain and retain employment in occupations for which employers have persistent demand. Learn to Earn Programs will help participants set and achieve goals necessary for employment and sustained economic stability, such as maintaining and growing family net resources and minimizing the real or perceived potential impact of increased earned income on benefit receipt, including improving coordination across benefit programs and reducing benefit cliff effects. As part of this program, MRC is providing information on benefits counseling.
11. **Work Based Learning Experiences for Students with Disabilities** to assist them in preparing for future employment and educational experiences.
12. **Apprenticeships:** MRC will utilize available apprenticeship resources, including the ODEP guide to expand apprenticeship, to provide apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the Commonwealth. As an example, MRC participates in the Merit Apprenticeship Program. Additionally, MRC has obtained a copy of the ODEP guide on apprenticeships. MRC will also work with the Career Centers on providing apprenticeship opportunities for consumers. MRC has leased space at the career centers and has staff dedicated to the career centers to make available the range of career services from Career Centers for MRC consumers.
13. MRC has developed an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to develop training programs to assist individuals with disabilities to complete training programs and obtain credentials to be substance abuse counselors. This has been identified as a growth area and a higher compensated profession in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
14. MRC has developed a partnership with the Career Centers known as the MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program where MRC is coordinating training services for MRC Job Seekers through the MassHire Career Center network, as part of efforts to coordinate service delivery across WIOA workforce partners in Massachusetts.
15. MRC partners and contracts with the The Asperger/Autism Network's (AANE) Life Management Assistance Program (LifeMAP). This program provides practical assistance to individuals on the Autism Spectrum and other related conditions. LifeMAP provides intensive, highly individualized coaching by professionals with expertise in both Autism Spectrum Disorder and specific content areas. Coaches focus on identifying and overcoming the

specific barriers each client faces so that the clients can increase their levels of independence towards reaching their full potential.

## C. Overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

MRC strategies to overcome barriers relating to access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the MRC VR Services Program and the MRC Supported Employment Services Program include the following:

1. Outreach activities to identify and serve individuals with the most significant disabilities. MRC conducts outreach to community and state agencies, schools, other public institutions, and the general public. This is accomplished through direct contact and presentations by MRC local office, district and administrative staff, use of printed brochures, and agency consumer and employer trainings.
2. The MRC Supported Employment Program provides Supported Employment Services to consumers statewide through its local Area Offices. Services are coordinated by MRC counselors using a network of community rehabilitation providers, links with the local school system for transitioning youth and other state agencies such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health, especially through its clubhouse programs.
3. MRC has an ongoing statewide Bilingual/Bicultural vocational rehabilitation counselor group who meet on a regular basis to: discuss and share resources on how to outreach to and serve cultural and ethnic minorities, develop new or translate existing agency forms and brochures, and develop and conduct training programs for local and district offices in collaboration with the Commission's staff development unit. MRC has twelve VR counselors skilled in American Sign Language (ASL) and are qualified to work with consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing; thirty are fluent in Spanish and work with Hispanic consumers; four are able to communicate in Cantonese; two in Vietnamese, three are fluent in Portuguese; three are fluent in Khmer, three are fluent in French/Haitian Creole, and one counselor is fluent in Hindi and Tamil. A smaller number of area directors, head clerks and other clerical staff are fluent in American Sign Language, Spanish, Khmer, Cantonese, Mandarin, Haitian Creole, or Portuguese. Eleven full- and part-time sign language interpreters are also on staff. The Commission also maintains a statewide contract with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to secure additional ASL interpreters and CART reporters, as needed. Staff with specific language skills and interpreters are geographically placed so as to coincide with population and other demographics relating to target consumer groups.
4. MRC has translated key forms and informational materials into Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French Creole, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Mandarin Chinese as outlined in MRC's Language Access Plan. MRC recently completed a project to translate all correspondence letters in its electronic case management system into Asian languages which are spoken by MRC staff including Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, Khmer and Vietnamese. MRC is in the process of conducting focus groups in two of its offices with higher concentrations of Asian consumers to gather further information on how MRC can better address the needs of this underserved population. MRC has also developed a workgroup and workplan to focus on outreach efforts to Asian and other minority communities. Strategies and resources for outreach efforts will be developed as part of this workgroup. MRC will also consult its Bilingual Committee as part of these efforts and develop appropriate training programs for staff.
5. MRC is working to ensure equitable access to services for consumers with Autism. MRC has worked with several organizations such as The Asperger/Autism Network (AANE) to provide

training to staff and providers on the needs of individuals with autism, including competency to address behavioral, communication (including Alternative Augmentative Communication or AAC), sensory, social, and generalization needs. This will assist MRC staff in developing the capacity to address behavioral, communication (including AAC), sensory, social, and generalization needs for consumers. MRC also works with AANE to provide life-mapping services to individuals on the Autism spectrum to ensure equitable access.

6. MRC partners and contracts with the Federation for Children with Special Needs to assist families in accessing MRC services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

## p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

Describe:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission developed the following goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs for the previous Program Year as submitted in the approved VR services portion of the Massachusetts PY2016-PY2020 Combined State Plan. These goals were identified based on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted in collaboration with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, these goals are based upon agency performance on the former RSA Standards and Indicators, recommendations and input from the SRC, and input from MRC Senior Management. MRC will review progress on these goals on a regular basis with senior management. This is a report on progress on these goals based on PY2018 (FY2019) outcomes.

MRC's strategies are to work with the senior management team to evaluate and assess progress towards the achievement of these goals, to identify lessons learned, and any corrective actions. Progress towards goals is distributed to local managers, supervisors, and counseling staff.

**Goal 1:** Continue to Increase Employment Outcomes through placement, training, and Job Driven Trainings provided through MRC's Job Placement Unit, Employer Account Management System, and Annual Statewide Hiring Event.

**Measurement:** Total Number of Successful Employment Outcomes achieved through the involvement of the MRC Job Placement Unit in the current fiscal year, Total Number of Successful Employment Outcomes (Status 26 closures) with Employers participating in MRC's Account Management System in the current fiscal year, Total number of Successful Employment Outcomes (Status 26 Closures) from Consumers Participating in MRC's annual Statewide Hiring Event in the current fiscal year.

**Target:** Exceed 400 Successful Employment Outcomes for MRC's Job Placement Unit, exceed 65 Successful Employment Outcomes for Consumers Participating in the Statewide Hiring Event, and exceed 200 Employment Outcomes from Employer Account Management System.

Data Source: MRCIS Case Management System, MRCIS Job Placement Module

Frequency: Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Consumers Obtaining Successful Employment Outcomes in PY2018 (FY2019)

Competitive Employment Outcomes through MRC's Employer Engagement Efforts (Job Placement Unit, Account Management System) Annual Hiring Event)

Job Placement Unit Outcomes: Goal: 400 Actual: 758

Hiring Event Outcomes (2018): Goal: 65 Actual: 84

Employer Account Outcomes: Goal 200: Actual: Being Calculated

MRC continues to focus on reaching out to employers and develop partnerships designed to lead to competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This is tied into the emphasis of employer engagement under WIOA. MRC's Employment Service Specialists in coordination with the Job Placement Specialists continue to outreach to employers especially to those in high growth industries, including employer accounts. MRC operated its 7th Annual Statewide Hiring Event in 2019 in partnership with the US Office of Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) with Federal Contractors.

**Goal 2:** Develop a joint employment initiative and complete pilot projects with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to increase employment outcomes to better meet the needs of individuals with mental health disabilities.

Measurement: Complete planning of MRC-DMH employment initiative and complete and evaluate three MRC-DMH pilot projects.

Target: Complete planning of MRC-DMH employment initiative and complete and evaluate 3 MRC-DMH pilot projects by the end of the program year PY18. MRC is currently in the process of developing multi-year annual targets and will update as required.

Data Source: N/A

Frequency: Annually.

Evaluation of Progress: MRC has completed the three MRC-DMH pilot projects. Lessons learned and best practices were incorporated into the development of MRC and DMH's joint employment initiative to increase employment outcomes and create career pathways to better meet the needs of individuals with Behavioral Health needs utilizing the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) Model and the CIES Pay for Performance competitive employment model. This program was launched on July 1, 2019.

**Goal 3:** Develop a pilot project with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to collaboratively work to improve services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities receiving TANF support. MRC is currently in the process of developing multi-year annual targets and will update as required.

Measurement: Completion of ISA and hire staff for MRC-DTA Individual Planning and Support Pilot Project.

Target: Completion of ISA, hiring of staff, and commence services for MRC-DTA Individual Planning and Support Pilot Project by the end of the program year.

Data Source: N/A

Frequency: Annually

Evaluation of Progress: MRC has successfully launched the MRC-DTA Empower to Employ Program as of July 1, 2018. Four offices (Lawrence, Braintree, Salem, and Brockton) are operating with a fifth to join during late 2019.

**Progress on Goals 4 through 9:** (Common Performance Measures): During PY2018, MRC reported baseline data to RSA for the WIOA Common Performance Measures as specified in the state plan requirements. MRC will have a negotiated adjusted performance goal established for Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021, and performance goals will be developed by RSA for the remaining measures for PY2022 and beyond once PY2020 and PY2021 data is submitted.

As the VR program only began reporting data for the common measures as of July 1, 2017, MRC only has initial data for PY2018 for Measurable Skills Gains and PY2018 for Employment Rate at 2nd Quarter After Exit and Median Earnings during 2nd Quarter After Exit, and for Effectiveness of Serving Employers. Data for the 4th Quarter After Exit Employment Rate and Credential Obtainment will be available after the completion of PY2019.

**Goal 4:** Employment Rate at 2nd Quarter after Exit 48.2%

**Goal 5:** Employment Rate at 4th Quarter after Exit: N/A\*

**Goal 6:** Median Earnings at 2nd Quarter after Exit: \$4,332.83

**Goal 7:** Credential Obtainment Rate N/A\*

**Goal 8:** Measurable Skills Gains 8.4%

**Goal 9:** Effectiveness of Serving Employers – Retention from 2nd to 4th Quarter after Exit: 75%

Effectiveness of Serving Employers - Repeat Business Customers: 11.6%

**Goal 10:** Maximize Successful Employment Outcomes for 90 Days or Greater to exceed last year's Program Year Outcome

**Measurement:** Total Sum of Successful Employment Outcomes for MRC Consumers for the Current Program Year (Status 26 Closures)

**Target:** 4,000

**Data Source:** Status 26 Closure Data from MRCIS Case Management System, Monthly Standards and Indicators Tracking Report

**Frequency:** Monthly, Annually

**Evaluation of Progress:** Consumers Obtaining Successful Employment Outcomes in PY2018 (FY2019): Goal: 4,000. Actual: 3,695 Variance: -305

MRC was short of its goal for the most recent program year (PY2018) as 3,695 consumers achieved successful employment outcomes of 90 days or greater, falling short of the target in the state plan by 305. MRC served less consumers during PY2018 as the agency was going through some financial challenges and a new maximum obligation policy affected referrals during the period.

**Goal 11:** Maximize the number of Consumers Exiting the MRC VR Program whose Primary Source of Economic Support is from their own Employment Earnings

**Measurement:** Proportion of Individuals Successfully Closed in Status 26 in the current fiscal year with a RSA-911 Employment Status Code of Competitive Employment in MRCIS with hourly wages at or above minimum wage (the higher of either State or Federal, Minimum Wage currently is \$12.00 in Massachusetts) whose Primary Source of Support at Closure is Personal Income (Code 1) minus the proportion of those consumers whose primary source of support at application was personal income (Code 1).

**Target:** At or above 58%

**Data Source:** MRCIS Case Management System, Monthly Standards and Indicators Tracking Report

**Frequency:** Monthly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: PY2018 (FY2019): Target: 58% Actual: 67.1% Variance: +9.1%

MRC successfully achieved its goal for the most recent program year (PY2018) as MRC saw a 67.1% increase in consumers exiting MRC's vocational rehabilitation program with successful employment outcomes with personal incomes as their primary source of financial support compared to their primary source of financial support at the time of entry into the VR program.

**Goal 12:** Maximize the Number and Percentage of youth consumers served by MRC completing education and training programs, including post-secondary education.

Measurement: Number and Percent of Youth Age 14 to 24 Completing Education and Training Programs. Measured by the flow of Youth Consumers moving from Status 18 Training and Education into Status 20 Job Ready or Status 22 Job Placement during the month/fiscal year divided by the total number of youth consumers served in Status 18 Training and Education during the month/fiscal year

Target: At or above 225 or 3% of youth consumers per month completing training or education, annual total of 2,750 or 16%.

Data Source: Data from MRCIS Case Management System

Frequency: Monthly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Consumers of Transition Age Completing Education and Training Programs PY2018 (FY2019): Goal: 2,750/16% Actual: 2,105/26%

In PY2018, MRC was close to its target for the number and met its target for percent of consumers of transition age (14 to 24) completing training and education programs. MRC served less individuals in PY18, therefore the number was lower than anticipated but the percentage completing training and education was higher than anticipated. Serving transition-age consumers effectively is a priority of the agency.

**Goal 13:** Maximize the Number and Percentage of high school students receiving VR and/or Pre-Employment Transition Services from MRC, either eligible or potentially eligible.

Measurement: Number of High School Student Consumers Served by MRC receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Target: 4,100

Data Source: Data from MRCIS Case Management System

Frequency: Monthly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Students Receiving Services from MRC: PY2018 (FY2019): Goal: 4,100 Actual: 4,315

In PY2018, MRC successfully exceeded its target for high school students served by MRC VR and/or receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services from MRC by a wide margin.

**Goal 14:** Maximizing the Number of Successful Competitive Employment outcomes and the percent of Placements leading to Successful Employment Outcomes through MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) programs in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Providers

Measurement: Total Number of 90 Day Successful Employment Outcomes from CIES Program; Total Number of CIES Successful Employment Outcomes divided by the total number of 30 Day Placements for the CIES Program.

Target: Exceed 850 Successful Employment Outcomes for CIES for the fiscal year and greater than 75% of CIES placements result in successful employment outcomes

Data Source: MRC CIES Quarterly Cumulative Utilization Report and Analysis Report

Frequency: Quarterly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Competitive Employment Outcomes through MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services Program (CIES) PY2017 (FY2018)

CIES Successful Employment Outcomes Goal: 850 Actual: 883 Variance: +33

% of CIES Placements Leading to Successful Employment Outcomes: Goal: 75% Actual: 84.9% Variance: +9.9%

Through its Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Providers, MRC achieved both state plan targets under this goal in PY2017 by achieving 883 Successful Employment Outcomes through CIES, exceeding the goal by 33, and achieving a 84.9% rate of successful employment outcomes for consumers placed through CIES.

**Goal 15:** Continue to provide consumers with an avenue to access employment and training opportunities through participation in the Donated Vehicle Program in partnership with Good News Garage.

Measurement: Number of Consumers Participating in the Donated Vehicle Program who obtain a successful employment outcome or who enter training and education (Status 18) divided by the number of consumers participating in the Donated Vehicle Program during the current fiscal year.

Target: Greater than 80% of Consumers participating in the Donated Vehicle Program during the current fiscal year result in successful employment outcomes or enrollment in training or education (Status 18).

Data Source: MRCIS

Frequency: Quarterly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Competitive Employment Outcomes and/or Enrollment in Training and Education as a result of MRC's Donated Vehicle Program, PY2018 (FY2019)

Goal: 80% Actual: 100%

In PY2018, MRC met its state plan targets under this goal as 100% of consumers participating in MRC's Donated Vehicle Program respectively achieved a successful employment outcomes or enrolled in training and education programs, exceeding the goal of 80%.

**Goal 16:** Provide Quality Vocational Rehabilitation Services leading to increased successful employment outcomes to individuals with Autism.

Measurement: Number of successful employment outcomes as defined by Status 26 closures for MRC consumers with a Primary and/or Secondary RSA Disability Cause Code of 08.

Target: Equal or greater to 175

Data Source: MRCIS Case Management System

Frequency: Quarterly, Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Competitive Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Autism PY2016 (FY2017):

Goal: 175 Actual: 336 Variance +161

**Goal 17:** Continued Outreach to the Asian community to identify strategies for serving this underserved population.

Measurement: Completion of Focus Groups to MRC regions with high concentrations of Asian community.

Target: Completion of Focus Groups to MRC regions with high concentrations of Asian community by the end of the program year, with consultation of the diversity and bilingual committees to review

results and to develop strategies for increasing outreach efforts and services to the Asian community, to present to agency leadership.

Data Source: N/A

Frequency: Annually

Evaluation of Progress: Outreach to the Asian Community: During PY2018 MRC held a focus group in its Lowell office which has a high concentration of Cambodian residents. The office has a dedicated counselor that speaks Khmer with a dedicated caseload serving the community. The focus group involved consumers, family members, community organizations, and other stakeholders. The information from the focus group has been used to establish a working group to focus on outreach to the Asian community. Lessons used in Lowell and learned from the focus group are being used to develop a workplan to develop and implement a series of strategies to reach out to the Asian community. A focus group in the Braintree Office is planned for early 2020.

**Goal 18:** Research Best Practice Models to Increase Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Measurement: Completion of research of best practice employment models such as the Progressive Employment Model, Missouri's Pre-ETS potentially eligible model, and development and completion of a presentation to MRC's Leadership Team.

Target: Completion of Research by the end of the program year.

Data Source: N/A

Frequency: Annually

Evaluation of progress: MRC continues to research best practice models to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities. MRC has used its learnings from its research and incorporated them in the development of the Empower to Employ Program with the Department of Transitional Assistance and the MRC – Department of Mental Health Employment Initiative, both programs are utilizing an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach based on research of best practices.

## B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities

The following is an evaluation of the extent to which the MRC program goals described in the previously approved VR services portion of the Unified State Plan for the most recently completed program year, were not achieved.

MRC achieved most of its goals and priorities as stated in the approved VR services section of the Massachusetts Combined State Plan for PY2016 except for Goal 10. Apart from Goal 10, there are no notable factors impeding the achievement of the goals and priorities. For Goal 10, which was to maximize the number of successful employment outcomes of 90 days or more for individuals with disabilities served by MRC, MRC fell short of its numerical target for employment outcomes. During PY17 and into PY18, MRC saw a drop in the number of consumers served by its VR program. This ultimately led to the slowing of employment outcomes. There were a variety of factors which may have contributed to this drop in consumers served and ultimately in employment outcomes. First there was a decrease in referrals to MRC VR during this period compared to prior periods (although this has improved so far in PY2019). Second, MRC underwent a series of financial challenges leading to the enactment of a revised maximum obligation policy, which also may have affected consumer

referrals. There was also a period of increased unsuccessful employment outcomes which combined with lower referrals led to a drop in the number of consumers served. This has since stabilized.

As noted above, for Goals 4 through 9: (Common Performance Measures): During PY2018, MRC reported baseline data to RSA for the WIOA Common Performance Measures as specified in the state plan requirements. MRC will have a negotiated adjusted performance goal established for Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021, and performance goals will be developed by RSA for the remaining measures for PY2022 and beyond once PY2020 and PY2021 data is submitted. As data continues to become available, MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance Department will begin to analyze the data and create a report for management on the common measures.

## **2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:**

### **A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals**

Supported Employment Program FY2019/PY2018 Goal Achievement:

Consumers Served: Goal: 450, Actual: 485

Employment Outcomes: Goal: 88, Actual: 90

MRC's strategy for provision and delivery of Supported Employment Services utilizes a network of community providers. MRC reviews progress on supported employment cases with staff and providers on a quarterly basis to assess progress and make any necessary corrective actions to ensure consumers are receiving quality services.

MRC achieved its goals for the Supported Employment Program for FY2019/PY2018 as stated in the approved VR section of the Massachusetts Combined State Plan. MRC saw a steady number of consumers successfully employed and served through MRC's Supported Employment Program. These consumers were served using a combination of Title I and Title VI B funds.

### **B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities**

MRC achieved its supported employment goals for PY2018/FY2019, therefore there are no factors impeding the achievement of the goals and priorities. MRC monitors economic and labor market trends to forecast the potential impact on MRC's ability to achieve our employment goals and priorities. MRC's leadership team works closely with our fiscal staff to project available resources to provide services and the potential impact on achievement of our goals and priorities.

## **3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA**

During PY2017 and PY2018, MRC reported baseline data to RSA for the WIOA common performance measures as specified in the state plan requirements. As required by RSA, MRC began collecting data for the Common Performance Measures as of July 1, 2017, replacing the prior Vocational Rehabilitation Standards and Indicators. As the VR program only began reporting data in the fall of 2017, MRC will continue reporting baseline data for RSA on these measures for PY19, and for all measures except Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021. MRC will have a negotiated

adjusted performance goal established for Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021, and performance goals will be developed by RSA for the remaining measures for PY2022 and beyond once PY2020 and PY2021 data is submitted.

As the VR program only began reporting data for the Common Measures as of July 1, 2017, MRC only has initial data for PY2017 and PY2018 for Measurable Skills Gains and PY2018 for Employment Rate at 2nd Quarter After Exit and Median Earnings during 2nd Quarter After Exit, and for Effectiveness of Serving Employers. Data for the 4th Quarter After Exit Employment Rate and Credential Obtainment will be available after the completion of PY2019. MRC has and will continue working with its workforce partners to complete the Statewide Performance Report for the Common Measures.

MRC's Data Analytics and Quality Assurance department will continue to analyze the data as it becomes available and create a report for management on the Common Measures. A data dashboard of this information will also be pursued to push data down to staff at the office and counselor level as applicable. This will allow the agency to work on strategies to increase performance on the Common Measures.

## **MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION**

### **MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TWO YEAR PERFORMANCE**

<b>MRC WIOA Common Measure Performance, PY17 and PY18*</b>	<b>PY17 (FY18)</b>	<b>PY18 (FY19)</b>
Employment Rate at 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	48.2%
Employment Rate at 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	N/A*
Median Earnings at 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	\$4,332.83
Credential Obtainment Rate	N/A*	N/A*
Measurable Skills Gains	13.1%	8.4%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers – Retention from 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	N/A*	75%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers - Repeat Business Customers	15.0%	11.6%

\*Note- Complete Employment at Fourth Quarter after Exit and Credential Obtainment Rate are not available yet for PY17 and PY18 and were not included by RSA in the PY17 and PY18 WIOA Annual Report Data for Vocational Rehabilitation.

## **4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the Commission under section 110 of the Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. Consistent with the findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and goals and priorities identified in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council, the Commission uses funds to support innovation and expansion activities to address the needs of individuals with disabilities, primarily individuals with the most significant disabilities, and to promote increased employment rates and labor force participation rates for people with disabilities across Massachusetts. Activities include:

1. On-The-Job Trainings and Job-Driven Trainings with Employer Partners: MRC continues to expand Job-Driven Trainings (JDT) and On-the-Job (OJT) training and evaluations. MRC has found that many consumers who participate in an OJT or Job-Driven training obtain employment with the OJT or JDT. Other participants are able to obtain employment elsewhere as a result of their participation in the OJT or JDT because they gained a recent work experience and/or developed job-specific skills. MRC has created job driven training programs to date with the Home Depot, CVS Health, Lowes, G4S Security Solutions, the Kraft Group, MAPFRE Insurance, Advance Auto Parts, and Enterprise Holdings, and Allied Universal Security Services, amongst other employers. In addition, MRC holds job-driven trainings for human service jobs and has started to offer a job-driven training for IT jobs. MRC is also exploring a cyber security job driven training program partnership with CISCO; also it is working on developing new job-driven training programs with Travelers Insurance, and BJ's Wholesale Club, and developing new partnerships with UPS and Fed Ex.
2. MRC - Department of Transitional Assistance Empower to Employ Project: MRC and the Department of Transitional Assistance have developed a project known as Empower to Employ designed to increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities receiving TANF benefits. The partner agencies use a jointly-funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services. Through this collaborative effort, DTA and MRC are utilizing an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to facilitate recruitment (pre-engagement), engagement, service delivery and placement.
3. MRC-Department of Mental Health Employment Initiative: MRC and DMH have undertaken a new initiative as of July 2019 where MRC coordinates employment services for individuals with mental health needs served by the Department of Mental Health's Adult Clinical Community Services (ACCS) program in collaboration with DMH and its vendors. The new MRC/DMH Employment Initiative is designed to build an integrated employment framework that inspires and engages innovation to ensure full employment for people with mental health needs at the same rate of employment as the general population. The focus of this initiative is on individuals served by DMH through Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS). These individuals are being referred to MRC for Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services. To serve these individuals, MRC is using an Integrated Resource Team approach, where partner agencies and supports come together to craft and jointly own a Job Seeker's employment goal, to coordinate wrap-around services and ongoing collaboration and communication. MRC has hired dedicated staff with funding through the ISA to work with ACCS referrals. These counselors will have smaller caseloads and will work with providers, DMH providers, DMH, and other MRC staff to rapidly engage with consumers, develop a plan for employment, and coordinate services designed to assist these consumers in achieving successful employment outcomes.
4. Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Grant Project: MRC is in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of a 5- year demonstration grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) known as the Transition Pathway Services Grant. This project is evaluating best practices for provision of work-based learning experiences to students with disabilities through a coordinated model of services provided by community partners including MRC, career centers, independent living centers, pre-employment transition vendors and local educational authorities. The goal is to increase employment and/or post-secondary education opportunity for students with disabilities based on their abilities, skills, needs and employment opportunities in the local economy.
5. Kessler Foundation Career Pathway Services Employment Grant: MRC recently completed a two-year grant from the Kessler Foundation to determine what the best practices are in assisting individuals undergoing physical and mental restoration to obtain employment and reduce their reliance on public benefits. Known as Career Pathway Services, this project utilized a client-centered, customized service model providing comprehensive benefits planning services, customized client-centered employment planning, peer supports from

Independent Living Centers, and job matching tools. The project resulted in the development of a series of best practices for working with individuals with more complicated needs.

6. IT enhancements to modernize the agency's technology and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services. These include a provider portal to assist in reporting and tracking the provision of Pre-ETS services to potentially eligible consumers, to enhance tracking and reporting on internal job placement services, to develop a consumer portal for information and referral, and to develop a paperless system using Electronic Data Management.
7. MRC's Job Placement Unit operates an annual Federal Hiring Event in partnership with MCB, other workforce partners, and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) in their Boston and Hartford offices to assist consumers with securing competitive employment comparable with their interests and abilities. MRC prepares consumers to interview for available jobs with employers participating in the event. The event focuses on direct job placement with participating employers and is not simply a career fair. In 2019, MRC completed its 7th annual Hiring Event. Since 2013, Over 480 individuals have been successfully employed across the Commonwealth through participating in this annual one-day event. The aggregate annual wages of all successfully employed consumers through the hiring event since 2013 is approximately \$10.31 million. Consumers have been employed in a variety of occupations ranging from office and administrative support, health care, protective service, human services, and management occupations, amongst others.
8. Transportation: MRC is working diligently to address transportation barriers faced by its consumers. MRC has updated transportation resource fact sheets on its website and makes them available to consumers at its Area Office. MRC has also hired a transportation coordinator through its Transition Pathway Services (TPS) grant and MRC will document lessons learned and best practices at the end of the grant period. One major achievement has been that MRC consumers are now automatically eligible for the Transition Access Pass (TAP) program. This program offers half-fare rides on all Regional Transit Authorities across the Commonwealth. MRC also works with the Executive Office of Health and Human Service Transportation office on transportation for consumers and operates an innovative car donation program to assist individuals in accessing worksites. MRC has a benefits planning grant to assist consumer in their efforts to go to work, which can include the Plan for Achieving Self Supports (PASS) and impairment-related work expenses as incentives for an individual to go to work. MRC also uses IRS Section 44 as a strategy to assist consumers with Transportation needs. MRC will continue to work with transportation agencies to explore other creative transportation options for consumers.
9. Employment of Individuals with Disabilities in State Jobs: MRC places numerous individuals with disabilities into state government jobs each year, including at MRC. MRC has a diverse workforce with a high percentage of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. We have a key contact with the state's Human Resources Division to facilitate employment for consumers in state jobs, including the provision of On-The-Job training and internship opportunities with state and federal agencies. The Commonwealth also participates in MRC's annual hiring event to provide information to consumers on available state job opportunities, including how to apply.
10. Research Best Practices Models to Increase Employment of Individuals with Disabilities: MRC will continue to research best practice models designed to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts.
11. Learn to Earn: MRC is engaged with the Learn to Earn initiative. Learn to Earn is a comprehensive approach to providing unemployed and underemployed individuals who are receiving assistance from public benefit programs with the supports, skills, and credentials they need to gain and retain employment in occupations for which employers have persistent demand. Learn to Earn Programs will help participants set and achieve goals necessary for employment and sustained economic stability, such as maintaining and growing family net resources and minimizing the real or perceived potential impact of increased earned income

on benefit receipt, including improving coordination across benefit programs and reducing benefit cliff effects. As part of this program, MRC is providing information on benefits counseling.

12. Work Based Learning Experiences for Students with Disabilities to assist them in preparing for future employment and educational experiences.
13. Apprenticeships: MRC will utilize available apprenticeship resources, including the ODEP guide to expand apprenticeship, to provide apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the Commonwealth. As an example, MRC participates in the Merit Apprenticeship Program. Additionally, MRC has obtained a copy of the ODEP guide on apprenticeships. MRC will also work with the Career Centers on providing apprenticeship opportunities for consumers. MRC has leased space at the career centers and has staff dedicated to the career centers to make available the range of career services from Career Centers for MRC consumers.
14. MRC has developed an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to develop training programs to assist individuals with disabilities to complete training programs and obtain credentials to be substance abuse counselors. This has been identified as a growth area and a higher compensated profession in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
15. MRC has developed a partnership with the Career Centers known as the MassHire Training and Placement Collaborative Program where MRC is coordinating training services for MRC Job Seekers through the MassHire Career Center network, as part of efforts to coordinate service delivery across WIOA workforce partners in Massachusetts.
16. MRC partners and contracts with the The Asperger / Autism Network's (AANE) Life Management Assistance Program (LifeMAP). This program provides practical assistance to individuals on the Autism Spectrum and other related conditions. LifeMAP provides intensive, highly individualized coaching by professionals with expertise in both Autism Spectrum Disorder and specific content areas. Coaches focus on identifying and overcoming the specific barriers each client faces so that the clients can increase their levels of independence towards reaching their full potential.

## q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Include the following:

### 1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has established a process to provide quality statewide Supported Employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, for adults and youth. MRC will be utilizing Title I funds and Title VI B funds to provide Supported Employment services. MRC has developed a contingency plan to use Title I funds to provide Supported Employment Services if Title VI B are not appropriated in the federal budget MRC provides a range of supported employment services to assist consumers in their efforts to choose, obtain and maintain complete employment opportunities based on their abilities, skills, interests and needs as outlined in their Individualized Plan for Employment. MRC provides Supported Employment services through its

area office network. MRC provides supported employment services to youths and adults with disabilities based on their needs and services outlined in their individualized plan for employment.

MRC utilizes a network of Qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers through MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program to purchase and provide Supported Employment services to consumers. These programs, located throughout the state, serve persons with an array of significant disabilities including mental health, autism, deaf/severely hearing impaired, severely physically disabled, traumatic brain injured and dual diagnosed persons with intellectual disabilities and mental health, and other individuals with disabilities. MRC has recently completed a new procurement for CIES services which took effect on July 1, 2019. MRC adjusted the CIES model based on lessons learned and input from its staff, CRP partners, and other stakeholders. These adjustments are designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CIES services for MRC consumers, including supported employment services. MRC also incorporated peer support and flexible supports into the CIES procurement which should benefit consumers receiving supported employment services through MRC.

In addition, MRC works with its Workforce Partners and continues to expand partnerships with other state agencies such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health to provide wrap-around supports and comparable benefits to assist individuals receiving supported employment services in obtaining and maintaining employment.

## 2. The timing of transition to extended services

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has developed a process to provide extended ongoing employment support services to assist individuals with disabilities in maintaining and advancing in their careers utilizing state funding, comparable benefits, and natural supports for long-term extended support services after federal funds can no longer be used. Paid extended supports are provided through a network of qualified community rehabilitation providers as part of MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program as well as partnering with other state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Developmental Services.

Funding for extended long-term support services is available from several sources depending on the nature of the consumer's disability and the resources available. Sources include:

1. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission State Ongoing Support Funding
2. IRS Section 44
3. Department of Mental Health
4. Department of Developmental Services
5. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Statewide Head Injury Program
6. Social Security Work Incentives/PASS Plan
7. Impairment-Related Work Expenses
8. Natural Supports from Employers
9. Medicaid Waiver Supported Employment Services
10. Other Comparable Benefits

Transition to extended services begins once the individual achieves job stability for 90 days or more. As part of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), supported employment cases are identified and the need and funding source for extended support services is identified as part of the IPE. For youths, Title VI-B reserve funds will be used for extended supports. After job stability is achieved for this period of time, the MRC VR case may be closed successfully when the consumer and counselor mutually agree to the closure of the case. After case closure, post-employment services can be provided as needed, or the case can be moved to state-funded ongoing support resources with

contracted service providers, or extended supports provided through other agency funding or employer-based or other natural supports as described above.

## Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General) Certifications

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA[14], and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act[15];

Enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission**

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency)[16] agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[17], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[18], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

Enter the name of designated State agency

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission**

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[19] , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[20] , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.

7. The (enter the name of authorized representative below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

Enter the name of authorized representative below

**Toni A. Wolf**

8. The (enter the title of authorized representative below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;

Enter the title of authorized representative below

**Commissioner, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission**

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

## Footnotes

[14] Public Law 113-128.

[15] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

[16] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[17] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[18] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations.

[19] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

## Certification Signature

Signatory information	Commissioner, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Name of Signatory	Toni A. Wolf
Title of Signatory	Commissioner
Date Signed	March 3, 2020

## Assurances

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: **The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of	No

The State Plan must include	Include
the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	No
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

## Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	25.0%	20.0%	35.0%	30.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*